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DEAN BRIGGS

DEAN BRIGGS AT SIXTY-EIGHT

Photo by Purdy

DEAN BRIGGS

BY

ROLLO WALTER BROWN

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DEAN BRIGGS

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TO
E. A. B.

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PREFACE

IT has been said that the time to write about men is just after they have left the earth, since one can then, with most of the required evidence still available, write with unrestricted candor. Occasionally, however, there lives a man whose record is such that he may be written about while he is yet upon the earth. His friends who know him somewhat, and would know him better, may not prefer to wait till the end of the long Indian summer which they all wish for him.

Only Dean Briggs's modesty could suffer from a record of what he has done. But his modesty has already suffered much at the hands of his friends. And in this instance he may be saved by that greater modesty which will probably keep him from ever looking beneath the covers of a volume written about himself.

To mention everyone to whom I have become indebted in the preparation of this volume would be quite impossible. I wish, however, to make specific acknowledgment to the Boston *Globe,* the Boston *Herald,* the Boston *Post,* the Boston *Evening Tran-*

script, and the New York *Times* for the use of their indexed files; to the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine,* the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin,* the *Harvard Crimson,* the *Harvard Lampoon,* and the *Radcliffe Quarterly;* to President Charles W. Eliot, President A. Lawrence Lowell, Former Dean Byron S. Hurlbut, Professor Kuno Francke, Mr. Denman W. Ross, Professor Edwin H. Hall, Professor George H. Palmer, Mr. Lester M. Beattie, Mr. Charles F. Mason, and Mr. David T. Pottinger; to President Ada L. Comstock of Radcliffe College, and President Marion E. Park of Bryn Mawr College; to Mrs. Joanna Morgan, Mrs. Joseph Allen, Mrs. George G. Barker, Mrs. Bruce Elwell, Mrs. George P. Baker, Mrs. William A. Muller, Miss Phyllis Robbins, and Miss Beatrice Rogers; and to the many former students of Dean Briggs's who generously granted me the privilege of quoting from their private correspondence and from the Dean's written comments upon their stories, essays, and verse.

R. W. B.

DEAN BRIGGS

DEAN BRIGGS

CHAPTER I

Has the Myth a Foundation?

I

LE BARON RUSSELL BRIGGS could not qualify as the hero of a typical biography. He was not born in a log cabin. He did not land on American shores as a penniless immigrant. He never attracted the favorable attention of a corporation president by any prophetic expertness in licking postage stamps. He was just a modest New England boy who early went to college in the town where he lived, and then settled down to almost a half-century of pioneering within sight of the house of his youth, and in the very institution where he had received his higher education.

Nor is the official position which absorbed the best years of his life, and which gave him the one title he will always know, usually thought of as an opportunity for a picturesque career. He was a college dean. He punished the criminals of his academic

domain; he resolutely prodded young men whose chief vice was that they forgot to get up in the morning; he listened with patient amusement while the mothers of young culprits insisted with feminine powers of reiteration that their sons were the ultimate flowering of everything good in their families; he heard thousands of petitions for special dispensations of one kind or another; he prepared dozens of long reports to the president and the governing boards of Harvard University on such matters as admission, increases in enrollment, intercollegiate athletics, special students, and forgetful professors. He was endlessly occupied with all sorts of details which exacted time and energy and abundant good humor. How could there be any opportunity left for the development of a career?

Yet this man, before he retired from active official service in 1925, was called "the most romantic figure in higher education," "the Abraham Lincoln of the university world," "the greatest teacher in America," "the living patron saint of American college men," "the finest example of American civilization." When such estimates are borne in mind side by side with the prosaic externals of his official life, there can be little surprise that men have already begun to wonder if there is not a Dean Briggs myth. If some over-

zealous historian five hundred years from now were to come upon the untouched fragmentary records of the Dean's life, he might well be excused for reaching the conclusion that no such person had ever existed. Perhaps numerous dramatic incidents had been crudely wrought together round what was only a created name—a mediæval cycle in Massachusetts! Or perhaps two or three men bearing the same name had lived as contemporaries! How could one man have done all the diverse things that this man supposedly did? How could any man with the least unity of character have any wish to do them all?

II

To this mythical view many of the facts of his life gave color. He always stood in contrast with something: with his academic position, with himself, with convention, with the world.

His position as dean of the oldest institution in America was looked upon by everyone as carrying great dignity. Yet he was so unobtrusive in appearance that men saw him casually on the street every day without surmising that he was a person of any importance. One morning as he walked along the street on Beacon Hill in Boston, a flashily dressed young man in a stylish carriage drew up at the curb

and called to him: "Pardon me, my man, but I wonder if you'd mind holding my horse for me while I run into the State House for ten minutes." Dean Briggs expressed his pleasure at the prospect of being useful in such an important way. But the man, when he came back some time later, was perplexed that both his palmful of small coin and the extra-large cigar which he in turn proffered, should be declined with cheerful thanks.

Even in the vicinity of Harvard Square, where he spent virtually all of his life, he never experienced the popular notoriety of a distinguished citizen. "Say," asked the youth in charge of the soda fountain where Dean Briggs frequently stopped to have a glass of matzoon or some other fountain beverage, "some guy told me that that's Dean Briggs. Is it?" And though three or four Harvard students—very evidently not undergraduates—were among those who gazed inquiringly after the man striding across the Avenue with his green book-bag swung comfortably over his shoulder, no one was able to come forward with an unequivocal answer. Earnest student girls who paid part of their expenses by helping the wives of modest professors would exclaim when "the Briggses" were to come for dinner: "Oh, is it Dean Briggs? I'm so anxious to see what he'll be like!"

Carpenters, shopkeepers, teachers in the public schools, and retired citizens whose chief pride is in the extent of their Cambridge lore saw him going pleasantly about week after week and never once associated that youthful, easy gait, and that boyish, finely wrinkled face with a certain name which they frequently mentioned with alert respect—or familiar ostentation. They had not thought of the dean of a venerable university as a man who wore high rubber boots and a slicker in bad weather, or negligée blue collar and storm-tested straw hat in the sunny days of early spring.

And his activities as well as his appearance contrasted with his position. When at Commencement, on the platform of Sanders Theater, hemmed in by such guests as the President of the United States, two or three justices of the Supreme Court, the Governor of Massachusetts, and by visiting or resident dignitaries in the brilliant academic plumage of a hundred universities, he stood to present the candidates for degrees, his unaffected earnestness, his clear voice, high-pitched with a strange emotional tension that cannot be forgotten, and his sure appropriateness of phrase seemed closely enough in keeping with his position to satisfy anyone. But he desires a dog for his summer retreat in the Plymouth woods. He

goes to the dog pound in Boston and rescues a mammoth St. Bernard whose dignified humiliation at being locked up is profoundly impressive. At the South Station the baggage men refuse to take such a monster into their keeping unless he is properly crated. But crates are not built for such dogs. So the Dean climbs into the baggage car himself and rides with the dog from Boston to Plymouth. Even such an outdoor, animal-pursuing alumnus of Harvard as Theodore Roosevelt probably would have been obliged to take a second, identifying look, had he by any chance peered into that baggage car at some way station and discovered Dean Briggs and his dog happy in tranquil new friendship among the trunks, milk cans, and beer cases.

In like manner, it would be easy enough for anyone to believe that Dean Briggs was the author of numerous tables of statistics on how 3.7 per cent more freshmen had been dropped from college in one year than in the preceding year; or how the average age of freshmen entering Harvard had risen .2 of a year—let us say—between 1875 and 1900. Deans are supposed to busy themselves with such matters. But does a dean also write a book of charades so acceptable in the public's eyes that it goes through several editions? Or the libretto

of a children's opera? Or numerous pages of Mr. Dooley's supposed comments upon what goes on in Harvard University?

His contrasts with his position, however, were no greater than his contrasts with himself. Suppose some freshman's father who had caught a comforting breath from reading the Dean's books of essays when the son had brought them home with him were to come to Cambridge in order to gain a little more spiritual poise by meeting the man himself. How much poise would he gain by a casual meeting with a man of sixty-five who raced up and down the granite stairways of University Hall two or three steps at a leap; or who sat nervously first on one foot and then on the other as he signed diplomas and carried on a conversation at the same time; or who climbed into a chair with both knees and, resting his elbows on the back of the chair, gazed out of the window with an earnestness akin to pain while he talked haltingly to the man in conference with him?

A young man from the Middle West, who had found in Dean Briggs such a steadying friend as he had never dreamed could exist, brought his young wife to Cambridge as soon as he could make opportunity, and took her at once to meet this Dean about

whom she had heard incessantly ever since she had first talked with the man who was now her husband. She entered, somehow expectant to meet a man who quietly radiated spiritual composure. Dean Briggs was happy to meet her; he told of seven other men who had been in Cambridge with their brides within a week; and he asked agreeably about all sorts of personal matters. But as he talked, he fidgeted and squirmed; he sat alternately in one chair and another which faced it; he leaned upon first one elbow and then the other. The young husband was fascinated; the young wife was ill at ease. She could just reach her husband's foot under the table with her own. She signaled to him repeatedly, but he only moved his foot and went on glowingly with the conversation. When finally they arose to go, Dean Briggs, with his eye-glasses on his thumb and with his head tilted a little in the air, walked leisurely to the door with them. Suddenly he thought of a story that had come to him only the day before. With the hollow of his back he began to feel for the sharp edge of the door frame, and then with his free hand to grope behind his head for some anchor or support. Finally, in the form of a giant question mark beside the door, he told the story with great subtlety and in great glee.

Once the callers were out in the corridor, the wife chided her husband firmly: "Of course he is charming, but why in the world did you stay on and on? Couldn't you see his restlessness about something?" And the husband entered upon a belated explanation of the difference between the Dean's surface disturbances and the deep spiritual calm which men found in him when they were in distress and needed assurance.

These contrasts with himself are striking, no matter how intimately we penetrate his experience. He suffered. Few men have suffered more acutely. Always keyed high by enough work to break two or three men of ordinary endurance, he was much in that unguarded state where petty, unreal demons easily establish themselves and add misery to fatigue. Spooks of one kind or another beset him throughout his long career. As he walked along Brattle Street in tired tranquillity from his office to his house, he was suddenly terror-stricken lest he had failed to make response to a cordial invitation to spend a day with one of his former students. Or he cross-examined himself into sleeplessness over some punishment he had meted out to a freshman or some grade he had given to a senior. Or he lost his appetite at a dinner because he had not recalled immedi-

ately the name of one of the guests who had been in his course several years before. Professor Josiah Royce once expressed the wish that he might some time "feel as good as Dean Briggs is"; and another colleague added, "I hope I may never be as wicked as the Dean feels after he thinks he has been at fault."

At such times he often completely lost confidence in his own ability. Modest enough in his best moments, he was without hope for himself when weariness caught him unawares. In his late sixties he one evening came home in agony from a meeting where he had been one of the speakers. His half-sister, ten years his senior, was at the house. In great shame he confessed to her that he had never made such a complete failure in his life. He had said nothing and he had said it very poorly. How could he ever forget the humiliation of such an experience? He threw himself like a child on the floor by his sister's chair and writhed in the hopelessness of disgrace. His sister, though accustomed to such protestations of inferiority, on this occasion was half convinced that perhaps he had not spoken well, and was fully assured only the next morning when she met a friend who greeted her with, "Oh, you

should have heard that brother of yours last night! He was the life of the evening!"

Yet this man, so often downcast, was so much more frequently in high spirits that men habitually turned to him for hopefulness and unfailing humor. One of his colleagues, while speaking with President Eliot one day, observed that he sometimes thought a highly developed sense of humor was a handicap to a man in an important official position. "It is true," President Eliot replied. Then in amiable serenity he added, "I have frequently made the observation to Dean Briggs, but always without avail." Just so; for this characteristic habit of mind in the Dean—appreciated by no one more fully than by President Eliot himself—carried him through disheartening experiences which would have broken a man who took himself and the world too gravely.

His contrast with convention affected his reputation singularly. The world is so much accustomed to living by convention—and artifice—that when any man tries only to do what a reasonably intelligent, unhardened being would regard as genuine, he must be looked upon with curiosity. But Dean Briggs's little concern for the niceties of convention not only gave the impression that he was something of a character, a variant, but—by men's inability to

see the difference between the commonplace and the sublimely simple—gave some men the impression that he had no important positive virtues at all. If one wishes to impress the less discerning, the thing to do is to exhibit some highly organized, noisily running system of wholesale righteousness. Dean Briggs had none. His "method" was quiet penetration—a penetration comparable to the unnoticed but powerful action of soft rootlets.

He sits intent at his desk in the corner by the south window of his office—not a thin figure, but not sturdy—his clear, wrinkled face and his sparse, unruly light hair brightened by the sunshine. Some one enters. He looks up, hooking off his glasses with his thumb as he does so. For an instant his blue eyes are inquiring; then there is the smile of recognition, the spring from the chair with a half-crouching lope, and the radiant "Oh, how do you do!" or the familiar "Hello there! I'm glad to see you back. Sit down—at least for a minute." And he buries himself in the perplexing concerns of a young man who is very foreign to the pile of official "paper work" on his desk. What does it matter if an occasional colleague sarcastically observes that if the Dean were to give less time to visiting with college boys, he would not be so much

pressed for time by the "important" official duties of his office? This young man goes away heartened to the exactions of his life, and moved by a strange new sympathy for his kind.

Sometimes, even with all the work done late at night and over week-ends, the accumulations on the desk become too great, and then he puts the well-known "will-be-grateful" card on his door—a card different in the quality of its prohibition from any other "no-office-hours" sign ever written:

> Dean Briggs will be grateful if no one tries
> to see him this afternoon before five o'clock.

All afternoon men stalk boldly up the stairs, read the sign and reread it, and then tiptoe away. The Dean, after the luxury of such a period of deep seclusion, emerges once again ready to look sympathetically into every problem brought through the wide door of his office.

This could not be called the routine of the customary academic officer. Alert clearness of vision, eager sympathy, steadied enthusiasm, and an unfailing sense of fitness are not to be found in every occupant of a swivel-chair. Yet so accustomed are we to living under the honorable delusion that such

qualities are generally prevalent among men, that when once or twice in a lifetime we know a man who possesses them in right proportion, his conduct tallies so unobtrusively with our honorable delusion that we are in danger of seeing in him nothing at all exceptional. A politician who thought some of Dean Briggs's disciples over-enthusiastic in their college reminiscences protested, "But a man with a few delightful eccentricities, plenty of humor, and a generous loyalty is not necessarily a wonder, is he?" He is almost certain to be; most "wonders," in fact, get along with very much less! But he will be the kind of "wonder" who is not discovered in an hour.

He was not a rampant idol-breaker. He ran athwart the existing order only because he was eager to come at once to the matter of essential importance. All of the picturesque unconcern of his life may be thus explained. While he was president of Radcliffe College, he once cheerfully took his place at the head of the Commencement procession with his academic hood on upside down and inside out. One of the young women in the graduating class appealed to his daughter: "Couldn't you for once look after him before he comes over from the house?" His daughter, with a little of the casual turn of her

father, replied that if she did he would be all cluttered up again before he arrived.

Her remark characterized his habitual attitude. He felt that the human race had built up for itself a goodly number of traditions which were either useless or positively harmful. When one sees somewhere a glow of reality—whether in trivial detail or in things momentous—why should not these useless or harmful traditions be brushed aside in one's efforts to draw near to it? He wants a cup of tea at his table in faculty meeting, but as he enters with it, nibbling away at a cracker, the faculty already in session, the rug on the floor slips a little with him and sends the cup and the tea high in the air. Without acknowledging the smiles and the quiet chuckles of his colleagues, he goes at once for another helping, which he brings in safety to his table, where he drinks it with relish while he listens shrewdly to the discussion of the minutes. He shrinks as no one ever shrank from publicity, yet not even his dislike for the gaze of others is enough to prevent him from flitting about with a certain wraith-like nonchalance and creating eddies and ripples of laughter by his subtle observations on the progress of the meeting. In the subway train he looks restlessly at the young

woman standing a dozen feet away, until finally, unable longer to see her stand while he sits, he goes to her and begs her to take his seat. At ease hanging to a strap, he never hears the two young bloods who sat beside him, as they wonder who "the gallant old gent" is. If any nice Cambridge lady is troubled when he stands with his back against the mantelpiece, his elbows on the edge of it, his palms turned out and fingers relaxed, and his right foot ceaselessly searching for a support just above the floor, he probably will make some humorous, unacrimonious remark about her and go on hanging to mantels whenever he finds comfort in doing so. Or what matter if the Governor of Massachusetts does happen to recognize him as he drives through Boston in a little spring wagon—later a Ford—piled so high with miscellaneous household effects that it resembles one unit of a gypsy caravan! These numerous articles will be needed at his retreat in the Plymouth woods; all incidental considerations are beside the point. So it was also in important matters of educational policy. His boyish interest in the world about him, his restless intelligence, and his confident feeling for values refused to be disciplined to all the half-important niceties of a sophisticated civilization.

III

Now what could this sensitive, nervously vigorous man, so little concerned with living according to the tradition of the hour, do that would make him a national figure? In the opinion of many, it must be remembered, his time was not an unusually easy one to influence. The Civil War was over, and politically the country had settled down to the business of electing Republican Presidents. From the older parts of the country most of the pioneer spirits were pushing into the great trans-Mississippi West and leaving their native haunts to the less adventurous. In the realm of letters the New England writers—Longfellow, Emerson, Holmes, Whittier, and Lowell—were white-haired gods who still walked the earth in full view; and such a ruddy barbarian as Whitman was not yet a wholly acceptable subject for polite discussion. Criticism consisted chiefly in doing obeisance to those who had brought recognition to poetry in America—that is, to certain ones who had brought such recognition. The drama, so far as the writing of drama was concerned, was in a state of absolute lifelessness. Architecture had reached that lowest depth of degradation known as the President Grant style. Even Harvard, with

all of her supposed worship of tradition, and with her possession of such beautiful tradition as Massachusetts Hall, had given herself to monstrosities of architecture that reflected painfully on the supposed beauty of the human spirit; the return to the Colonial style had not yet been thought of. In education the elective system had not yet broken—for good or for ill—the rigid prescribed curriculum. Few women were in college, and many highly respectable persons deemed it improper that more should be there. Matthew Arnold, when he ventured to peep into a country in which other Englishmen had found so little of either sweetness or light, was received in docile awe—or in ignorance. America was not in a lively state of mind.

How, then, could this slender, uneasy young man, in whose life there were so many striking contrasts that it seemed to possess a strong element of unreality, come to such a place of power in the minds of his fellow-beings that his career should be worthy of commemoration?

CHAPTER II

What He Brought from His Youth

I

A WOMAN who first met Dean Briggs after he had become an officer of instruction in Harvard University frequently observed to her friends that he possessed a canny wisdom which could have come only from a long line of men and women who had struggled valiantly, and perhaps not always successfully, toward some high kind of truth. Others who have known him intimately have in similar manner commented upon distinctive qualities "that seem always to have been there."

Not that there is to be found in his parentage and youth a simple explanation of his every later act! To those who would have the fruits of one's past patently gross and unmistakably labeled, the mere statistics of Dean Briggs's ancestry and childhood offer little; and that little runs counter to all the popular formulas. From the day of his first official pronouncement he was an innovator, an individual who did unexpected things in unexpected ways. Yet

casually regarded, the early facts would make him an unyielding reactionary. His paternal and maternal ancestors, from the hour when the *Mayflower* landed its first passengers, had lived undisturbed in New England. He was born, December 11, 1855, in Salem, Massachusetts, a city that had early become known for its efficacious methods of dealing with anyone even suspected of entertaining ideas from afar. His birthplace in Salem was No. 9 Summer Street—within a stone's-throw of Witch House. He was the younger of two sons by his father's second wife, and his two half-sisters were his seniors by so many years that they might reasonably have regarded him as a helpless little angel who required their constant direction. According to popular conception, he was at birth introduced to a family and a region where he should have found no occasion to devise new categories or blaze interesting paths of his own.

But the elements that go into the making of an individual are not to be dealt with so simply. Characteristics that seem to have come to absolute rest are occasionally transformed into something mobile, brilliant, fruitful, when some happy accident swings them into a rightly balanced new relation. There must be allowance for infinite new proportions, new

balances, new instabilities. Perhaps, then, after all, Dean Briggs's inheritance and early environment provide a clearer explanation of his habit of looking at things afresh than at first might seem reasonable.

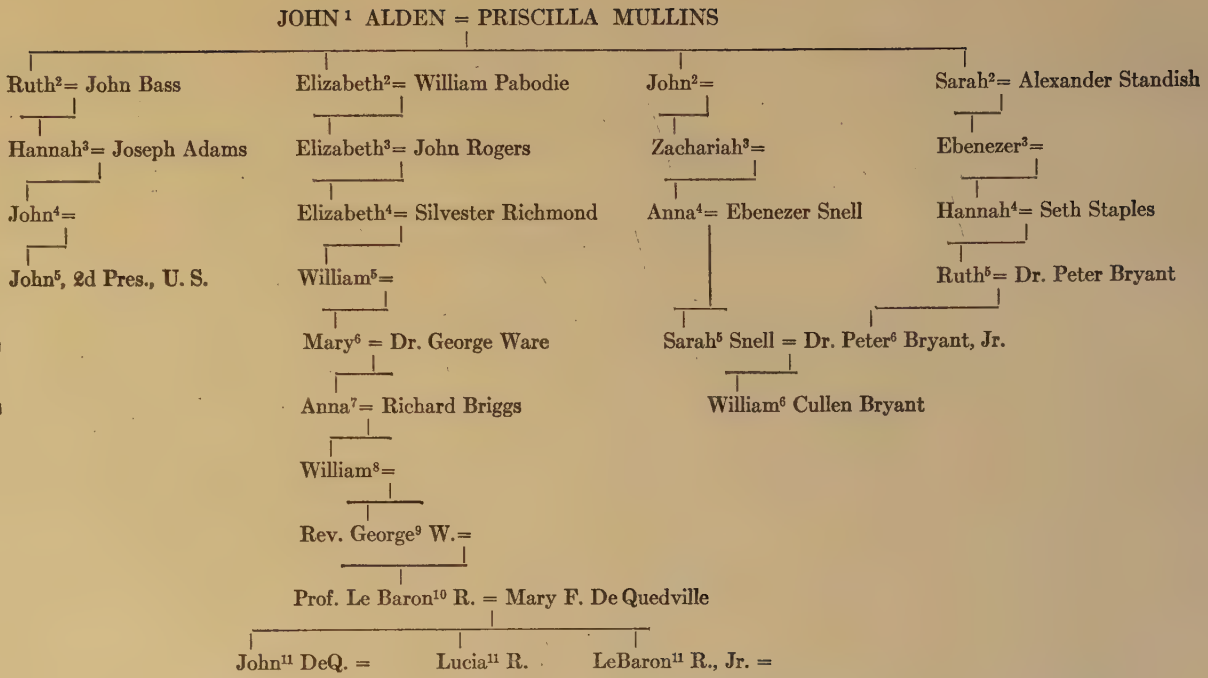
II

His father, George Ware Briggs, was a man of unusual vigor and strength of will. He was born at Little Compton, Rhode Island, in 1810, and as a boy lived on a farm. Because he was early left fatherless and was without brothers or sisters, he learned as a child the necessity of vigilant and responsible effort. Long before daylight he would be up and away to market with his saffron and vegetables. He worked also in the fields. Yet he found time for concentrated study. When he was eleven years old his mother took him to Brown University to enter him as a freshman. She presented herself and her boy to the president, who said that he believed it would be best for her to take him back home and hold him in her lap a year or two longer. But she insisted that the boy was ready for college, and he was admitted. Evidently the mother knew the extent and the thoroughness of her son's hard-earned preparation, for he had no difficulties with his college work, and he was duly graduated four years later—

at the age of fifteen. At twenty-four he had taught school, studied medicine for one year, taken up and completed the course in the Harvard Divinity School, and accepted the pastorate of the Unitarian Church at Fall River.

He lived to be eighty-five, and throughout his long life he was energetic almost beyond belief. From the time he was eleven years of age till he was eighty-one—when he suffered a clot on the brain from which he partially recovered—he never spent a whole day in bed. At seventy-two he went to Europe with his twenty-seven-year-old son and was such an enthusiastic, untiring traveler that the son rather than the father frequently yielded to exhaustion. When the prospects for a convenient meal at midday were poor, he would "eat a little extra" for breakfast, and then devote himself to sight-seeing without cessation for the entire day. His habits of activity as a boy kept him constantly active as a man. He would eat a hearty lunch and go directly from the table to the mowing of his lawn. He knew not how to be helped; he would pick up his luggage and trudge cheerfully to the station with it, rather than order a cab or trouble any of the members of his family.

He delighted in old, familiar clothes. A well-worn suit seemed to be a part of the man himself.



Dean Briggs's Paternal Ancestry from the Time of the Pilgrims. His mother was a descendant of Governor Bradford.

A hat became an inseparable friend. The family often protested, but ordinarily in vain. Once, after he had worn a hat until his children thought it had become altogether too familiar to the residents of Cambridge, where he then lived, one of his sons surreptitiously burned it. When the owner searched for it and could not find it, and appealed to the family for assistance, the son confessed what he had done. The father was indignant, and let the fact be known. The son, repentant, gave him the assurance that he would buy him a new hat; to which the father abruptly responded that he did not want a new hat, but an old one.

At least twice a year he called on every family of his parish, and, according to the testimony of his daughter and some of his former parishioners, he persisted in calling until he found every family at home. Constantly he was among the sick, the downtrodden, and the bereft.

Once when a newspaper reporter asked him whether he was conservative or radical, he replied, "Both!" Anyone might have been led to infer that the conservative in him was strong. He was self-effacing in physical plainness; he was self-effacing in spirit. A young woman who heard him preach in her own church when he was about seventy years

old said that she could not believe that the stocky, unimpressive man who walked to the front of the church was actually the Dr. Briggs who was to occupy the pulpit. "He was a plain little man, with fine-checked wrinkles all over his face. Later I found also that he was the kindest man in the world —unless I should except his son." The son to whom she referred has himself said of his father: "He was naturally diffident, especially in his own home, and so fearful of taking a place too large for him that he refused calls to more important pulpits and to higher salaries. . . . His will was so strong that he seemed to live his last five years on sheer courage; yet his wishes even in his own family were as unobtrusive as if he had been the least among them."[1]

It might be inferred readily that this unobtrusive man would be little inclined to strike out in new directions, or to support new causes. The facts, however, discredit any such inference. Like many another modest man—like the one whose gospel he preached in his pulpit every Sunday morning—he was fervent in espousing righteous new causes and in condemning those that were false or outworn. The radical in him was very strong. To begin with,

[1] "George Ware Briggs, 1810-1895," by Le Baron Russell Briggs, in *Heralds of a Liberal Faith*, vol. iii, pp. 37-40.

he turned from the Calvinistic faith of his mother to what he conceived to be the more liberal faith of Unitarianism. He took up the cause of the slave long before it had become fashionable to do so. He was active in behalf of total-abstinence societies when they were socially quite as unacceptable as the "black Abolitionists." And he championed peace among nations with a political foresight and a religious zeal that might well put him among the prophets. In 1846, when the inhabitants of Boston in old England appealed to the inhabitants of Boston in New England that they try in the spirit of brotherhood to avert war over the Oregon boundary, and a similar appeal was addressed to the people of the United States by the inhabitants of Plymouth, England, the Reverend Mr. Briggs, then pastor at Plymouth, Massachusetts, defied the chauvinistic cries for blood, and courageously pointed out the absurdity of a war over a matter that could be settled more justly in some other way. And on Sunday, July 4, 1847, in war-time, he assailed the United States government and the Mexican War with a candor that to-day, under like circumstances, would invite the immediate pursuit of the Department of Justice. "Who will defend the action of this day? We stand in a Christian temple now and try our cause by the

Christian law. . . . My country is dear to me as to those who boast her dominion and outward greatness but are silent over her sin. But I will not defend her call to her unholy battlefields, though liberty be written on her banner, while, as I judge, every blow is struck for slavery. I will not fail to condemn her wars, or to try her oppressions by the spirit of that Christ in whom she claims to trust."

He was unafraid of public sentiment. Even when his neighbors and his congregation were not sympathetic to his zealous war on slavery, he kept up the fight in his own pulpit—and theirs. "I cannot dream that my convictions are also yours. But you would justly scorn me did I stoop to be your echo. I could no longer honor you if I thought you could even wish it."[1] He was likewise unafraid of his own past. When the Civil War came nearer and nearer, and it seemed that he must give up either his fight for peace or his fight against slavery, he gave himself fully to the support of Lincoln and the cause for which Lincoln was standing. He believed in peace as fervently as ever; but when it became evi-

[1] Sermon, April 7, 1842. Printed in *The Liberator*, December 2, 1842. A complete list of Dr. Briggs's published sermons may be found in a carefully prepared article on "The Writings of George Ware Briggs (1810-1895)" by Mr. Albert Matthews in the *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, vol. xxiv, pp. 120-146.

dent that he must choose between a specific peace and a greater specific good that seemed possible only through war, he did not hesitate. And the bantering asides of his former neighbors about the universal brotherhood for which he had been working troubled him little if at all. He was still working for it!

Lucia Jane Russell, Dean Briggs's mother, was a woman who in many characteristics contrasted sharply with her husband. Instead of a somewhat rough-shod vigor and a noteworthy plainness of feature, she possessed a modest physical strength and a charming gentility and beauty. While she was still a young girl at the beginning of her teens, her intelligent, radiant face attracted everyone. Ralph Waldo Emerson was as much drawn to her as were the rest of her acquaintances. He was then a widower of thirty-two or thirty-three, and was paying court to Miss Lydia Jackson, a young woman declared by the inhabitants of Plymouth—once when he was lecturing there—to be the most accomplished of all the daughters of the region roundabout. The Jacksons and the Russells were near neighbors; and as he came with increasing promptitude to visit the Jacksons, he saw

George Ware Briggs
Dean Briggs's father

Lucia Russell Briggs
Dean Briggs's mother

more and more of the Russells. In truth, Lucia's brother, Le Baron, and her older sister, Mary, "stood up" with Mr. Emerson and Miss Jackson at the wedding. Emerson's admiration for the entire Russell family was great, but he continually singled out Lucia for special attention. In one of his letters to her in 1835, when she was thirteen, he reveals his admiration for her, and incidentally her evident spiritual precocity:

CONCORD, *8 March, 1835.*

MY DEAR LUCIA:[1]—I am afraid you think me very ungrateful for the good letters which I begged for and which are so long in coming to me, or that I am malicious and mean to make you wait as long for an answer; but, to tell you the truth, I have had so many "composition lessons" set me lately, that I am sure that no scholar of Mr. Moore's has had less spare time. Otherwise I should have written instantly; for I have an immense curiosity for Plymouth news, and have a great regard for my young correspondent. I would gladly know what books Lucia likes to read when nobody advises her, and most of all what her thoughts are when she walks alone or sits alone. For, though I know that Lucia is the happiest of girls in having in her sister so wise and kind a guide, yet even her aid must stop when she has put the book before you: neither sister nor brother

[1] Dean Briggs read this letter—now possessed by his daughter, Lucia Russell Briggs—in his address to the school children of Concord on the occasion of the Emerson centenary in 1903, but he did not mention the fact that it was to his mother. "Lucia" was referred to only as "a little girl of thirteen." Originally published by the Social Circle in Concord. Reprinted by permission.

nor mother nor father can think for us: in the little private chapel of your own mind none but God and you can see the happy thoughts that follow each other, the beautiful affections that spring there, the little silent hymns that are sung there at morning and at evening. And I hope that every sun that shines, every star that rises, every wind that blows upon you will only bring you better thoughts and sweeter music. Have you found out that Nature is always talking to you, especially when you are alone, though she has not the gift of articulate speech? Have you found out what that great gray old ocean that is always in your sight says? Listen. And what the withered leaves that shiver and chatter in the cold March wind? Only listen. The Wind is the poet of the World, and sometimes he sings very pretty summer ballads, and sometimes very terrible odes and dirges. But if you will not tell me the little solitary thoughts that I am asking for, what Nature says to you, and what you say to Nature, at least you can tell me about your books,—what you like the least and what the best, . . . the new studies, . . . the drawing and the music and the dancing, —and fail not to write to your friend, R. WALDO EMERSON.

Eight years later—that is, when she was a young woman of twenty-one—Emerson made reference to her in his *Journal:*[1] . . . "The virtues of the Russells are as eminent and fragrant here, at this moment, as ever were the glories of that name in England: and L[ucia] is a flower of the sweetest and softest beauty which real life ever exhibited."

Her sense of fitness was sure, her power of sym-

[1] August 5, 1843.

pathetic criticism amazing. She did not write for publication herself, but had she done so, she would have written the poetry of Emerson—somewhat subdued, somewhat more perfected. As it was, she contented herself with the writing of her husband. He turned his sermons and addresses over to her in order that she might throw out the figure of speech that did not "hit," and tone down the flowery periods which were always blossoming from his exuberant mind.

This sense of fitness extended to all matters. Her children turned to her for a clairvoyant counsel which they found nowhere else. Her neighbors regarded her as a source of wisdom in matters great and small. The people in her husband's congregation were worshipful in their manner of looking up to this extraordinary creature who could see—and do—what was right in any difficult situation. When she died, at the rather early age of fifty-nine, one of the ladies living near her in Cambridge declared that she was the loveliest woman who had ever lived. There can be no doubt that she lived so far above the petty details of life that she could see them clearly in their right relation to matters more important.

III

As a boy, then, Dean Briggs lived in a world that invited exploring. Everything was above him. At the time of his birth his father was a zealous, liberal thinker of forty-five; his mother a serene, reflective woman of thirty-four. His only brother stood above him in age and strength, and the younger of his two half-sisters was ten years his senior. In school, because of his precocity and conscientiousness, he was always in classes with his elders. Always was he suffering the torment of being younger than anyone else present; always was he catching somewhat desperate glimpses of things quite beyond the childhood in which he lived.

There should be no surprise, therefore, that he was a sensitive little boy, quite unlike the terrifying young devils who are supposed always to grow up into men of tremendous distinction. He was pained when any kind of creature was cruelly treated; he was easily "hurt" by his elders; he was distressed lest he not measure up to the standards of these elders who beset him on every hand.

Naturally, he grew in conscientiousness. The Miss Pearson who was his first teacher kept a journal while she conducted her little private school, and

Dean Briggs at Eight

among the comments which she one year made is this observation upon Dean Briggs: "Le Baron has made very satisfactory improvement during this quarter. He has learned his lessons, usually extremely well, and has taken a great deal of pains to learn to write." His efforts to learn to write, as well as his other school efforts, were not without results; for a solitary theme of his, preserved by a member of his family, reveals when he was ten or eleven a penmanship strikingly regular and well proportioned. Incidentally this theme, written about some of the rewards of persistence, shows a care for the details of composition that would almost withstand the scrutiny of its author in his most critical mood as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory! And at least one sentence gives clear promise of the feeling for balance which in his mature life came to be regarded as one of the hallmarks of his style.

The sublime world of his elders was making impressions upon him. Especially did he feel the spiritual influence of his mother. With his father he seems to have had no real acquaintance until he himself was twenty-six or twenty-seven and his father more than seventy—after his mother's death. But his mother was to him not merely some one

who had given him birth and who looked with understanding upon his youthful aspirations, but an ally, a beautiful, glorified being to whom he could turn and find a great new world of limitless reach and a great wisdom that met the most profound requirements of his life. It was difficult for him to speak of his mother; the subject was too sacred for discussion even when he had lived the better part of a half-century beyond the date of her death. Once, however, when he was inclined to speak of her, he said with suppressed feeling: "I do not believe any other man ever stood in quite the same relation to his mother. While she lived I turned to her in every kind of perplexity; and since her death I have continued to do so. Not in melodramatic, sentimental fashion, but continually in the course of the day's work. Whenever I am confronted with a baffling problem, I find myself asking what her wisdom would have led her to regard as best." This great spiritual retreat to which as a boy he could escape from his more obvious occupations gave him an assurance, a readiness to go beyond the superficially acceptable, which most of his playmates could not have comprehended.

While he was yet a small boy he came under the influence of an unusual teacher—one of the three

school-teachers who seem to have made any special impression on him. This was Henry F. Woodman, master of the old Hacker Grammar School in Salem. Unquestionably he was a teacher of extraordinary genius; for he taught grammar in such fashion that the boys not only learned grammar, not only thought of it respectfully as a valid part of the scheme of things, but worked at their lessons with so much enthusiasm that penetrating the intricacies of the subject took on the character of a brave adventure. His classes were alive with discussions of moods and modifiers and tenses and predicates and phrases. Grammar, to his pupils, eventually became second nature. Better still, his pupils always went away from his classroom with the feeling that they were —or might become—intelligent human beings.

From all this preoccupation with a world so largely in the hands of his elders, it is not to be inferred that Le Baron Briggs was without boy interests. He had many. The active life of the seaport, the railways, and the country round about fascinated him. The ships at Salem and at Plymouth became such an intimate part of his life that his vocabulary was for all time colored with the terminology of the sea. His mother had purchased from Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson a house in

Plymouth that overlooked the very landing-place of the Pilgrims. Much of his time, too, he spent in the great yellow house of his Grandfather Russell's family. It stood near the Town House, and he was much concerned with what went on in this formidable building, and was impressed deeply by the tragedy of men behind prison bars.

At both Salem and Plymouth he and his brother were much occupied with railroad locomotives. In those days the locomotives were gorgeous affairs with plenty of gold foil and with carefully chosen names instead of numbers. The Eastern Railroad, now a part of the Boston and Maine, at one time took to naming its engines from characters in Shakespeare—Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Coriolanus. According to good authority, Coriolanus, when new, was regarded as the highest achievement in locomotive art. Boys generally delighted in recognizing engines by their whistles. And it was a lark worth taking to go as far as Boston to see the first of a new series of engines with a new series of names. For Le Baron Briggs, only horses ranked with locomotives as objects of delight. Horses were magnificent and powerful as they reared nervously in their eagerness to be off. In those expansive days, too, he began to explore

the woods and ponds in the vicinity of Plymouth—a recreation that was to continue as a source of spiritual tranquillity throughout his life.

IV

In 1867, when Le Baron Briggs was eleven years old, his father accepted a call to the Cambridgeport Parish (afterward the Third Congregational Society), in order that his sons might have opportunity to go to Harvard College. In April of that year the family moved to 61 Kirkland Street, Cambridge, and in the following autumn Le Baron entered the Cambridge High School. Here he came under the influence of the other two school-teachers who seem to have impressed him significantly. One of these was Miss Elizabeth Fessenden. He was in her classes only one year, but she was a person of such sympathetic observation and such cheerful common sense that, in his estimation, she at once became one of his "best teachers." The other was William F. Bradbury, familiarly known as Brad, who was at that time Hopkins Classical Teacher in the school. Later he became headmaster, and was still in charge of the school when Dean Briggs's children attended it thirty years later.

Brad, according to various disciples, was not a

person of unlimited literary background; but he was an enthusiastic believer in education—especially if education meant the pursuit of mathematics and the classics—and he was a vigorous and successful drill-master. He was brusque in manner and he not infrequently ridiculed a pupil before the class. According to a pupil who attended the school when Brad was an old man, "Brad sassed the pupil and the pupil sassed Brad." Another pupil who looked back with pleasure upon his years in high school remarked: "Brad was an interesting old tyrant whom you had to respect and sometimes wanted to like." His great concern in life was that his boys should do well—in their examinations, in college, in the world. And with all his brusqueness, he treated his pupils with great confidence. Through him young Briggs became devoted to the classics and began to think about the mystery of education.

Much of Le Baron Briggs's early education—much that to-day would be sought in organized courses of instruction—came to him in the most incidental fashion. In his father there was nothing of the New England pastor of popular tradition who rules his household with the unyielding precision of natural law; yet in his father's study he heard the reading of the King James Bible, and he never

outlived the experience, as reminiscent touches in his writing will show. In his father's church and round his father's fireside he heard, too, the discussion of many social and political issues that deeply concerned inquiring men. In some such incidental fashion, also, he became a reader on his own account. His uncle, Le Baron Russell, early gave him books of poetry, which he read with ungoaded interest. Later this poetry was displaced by Oliver Optic. Still later he discovered Dickens, whom he read and reread so thoroughly that, years later, he told his friends that when he was seventeen he knew Dickens as he never came to know any other author. If only he could hear Dickens when he came to America! Through the generosity of his uncle he was twice able to do so. These opportunities to sit comfortably in a hall in Boston and see this demigod actually in the flesh did not lessen his ardor for *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*. After he had become a university teacher of English, he sometimes remarked that his young memory was so completely filled with Dickens that the room for other important things was inadequate. But he never ceased to find greatness when he turned to Dickens's works.

His admission to Harvard College in 1871 and his pursuit of studies there for four years seem to

have been matters accepted in the logical course of events rather than matters of flaming new significance. As a child he had been frightened by the thought of going to college, for college as he then saw it would mean separation from his playmates. But at Cambridge he simply grew into college; college was there, just five minutes beyond high school. He pursued his studies—a fixed course in the classics and mathematics, with some English, some ethics, and the like thrown in—with high conscientiousness, according to his teachers; and he graduated fourth in his class. Two professors filled him with zest for the scholarly life and with many hopes for higher education in America. These were George M. Lane, professor of Latin, and George H. Palmer, at that time a teacher of Greek as well as of philosophy. With the "outside activities" of college he was little concerned, although he did become interested in baseball—without participating.

In another respect, however, college was anything but a mere four years of conscientious academic work; for it was in his freshman year at college that he met Denman Ross, who was to become the most intimate friend he knew in a lifetime. Mr. Ross, who to-day is best known as a writer on art and as a teacher of the theory of design, but who may

Photo by Maynard Cushing

THE HARVARD YARD WHEN DEAN BRIGGS GRADUATED

This photograph, taken looking south from Memorial Hall Tower in 1875, shows Gore Hall on the right; Professor Shaler's house, the old President's house, etc., on the left; and beyond, Massachusetts Avenue—without a single modern store building. Widener, Sever, and the other big college buildings in this part of the Yard have all risen since that time.

well be known later as an experimentalist in painting, had even in his first year in college begun to put into practice a novel theory of life. He believed that the greatest permanent satisfaction can come to a man only when he consciously searches for the best and concerns himself with it to the exclusion of other things—a theory that his own life exemplifies with beauty and power. As freshmen he and Le Baron Briggs were acquaintances. As sophomores they became firm friends. Denman Ross could find no one in his class better than Le Baron Briggs; and it seems reasonable to suppose that Le Baron Briggs had precisely the same feeling about Denman Ross. Their friendship was absolute.

They were socially decent and mentally adventurous. They discussed their inmost experiences, they discussed college, they discussed people and sports and music and painting. Often they went somewhat cold-bloodedly on Sunday afternoon to some church where the music was exceptional, and discussed the singing, the versification of the hymns, the skill of the composer. They did not even live through a summer vacation without seeing each other. Every summer Denman Ross went to Plymouth to be a guest, and together they engaged in all sorts of exploring. They knew all the ponds and

byroads and paths between the northern shore of the Cape and Buzzard's Bay.

After they had received their college degrees, they completed plans to go to the University of Leipsic for a time. It was the thing to do. The Franco-Prussian War had just given Germany her new prestige. What one studied was not so important as that one had studied in Germany. In Berlin they could not help feeling Germany's dreams of imperialistic power, but in the provincial cities they could still find the Germany of Johann Sebastian Bach. Something of this older Germany they found in Leipsic, and were prepared to enjoy it. At their boarding-house there was a serious effort to maintain dignified traditions. Le Baron Russell Briggs was at once accepted by his landlady as Baron von Briggs; and she was greatly disappointed when he had mastered German sufficiently to explain to her that he was not a person of title.

They did not study much. The courses were unattractive—at least for them—and the winter was forlorn. For months after they arrived the sun scarcely had a chance to look down through the heavy damp haze. The food, moreover, where they felt obliged to eat, was poor. Just back of their lodging-house was a horse-meat market, and they

sometimes believed that the product of this market made its way to their dinner table. In January the oppressiveness became unbearable; they decided to move on. They spent a month in Dresden, interested, as always, in music. Then they made their way down toward Italy, and at length came into the sunshine of Verona and Venice. The sunshine helped to dispel the melancholy of the dismal winter.

V

The next autumn, back in Cambridge, Briggs did some private teaching and some studying. Greek was still his favorite field. How much of his preference was a natural inclination toward Greek and how much of it the subtle personal influence of George Herbert Palmer, it is difficult to know. In any event, he contemplated a Ph.D thesis on Greek Tragedy, and he hoped to find a permanent post as a teacher of Greek. The thesis was never written, and no position came until two years later, in the autumn of 1878. The college year at Harvard had opened a day or two before, but the courses—at least the freshman courses—had not yet met. President Eliot sent for young Briggs, explained that he needed a tutor in Greek, and asked him to accept a one-year appointment. The period of the

appointment was really three years, but the President, with his usual candor, explained that he knew of two men whom he could get the next year, and that he preferred either of them to Briggs. But they were not available now, and if he wished the appointment for one year, he might have it.

Briggs promptly accepted this third-choice appointment, and within two days was offering instruction in Greek. Inasmuch as a "tutor" at that time had charge of classes very much as an "instructor" does to-day, he was permitted to take no little initiative. He enjoyed the experience, and he hoped for more of it. Toward the end of the year he went to President Eliot to learn whether there might not be some other accidental niche for him to fill the next year. The President had forgotten that the appointment was for one year only—or at least ignored the fact—and assured him that he was to stay right on until the expiration of the three-year period.

This period in the field of Greek, however, was only a part of his probation. English as an academic field was developing. Briggs was led to believe that the opportunities in this flourishing subject were too great to be disregarded. So in 1881 he turned from teaching to graduate study,

As a Student at Leipsic

L. B. R. Briggs in 1881
At the end of his third year as a college teacher

and in 1882 received the degree of Master of Arts in English.

Before he was destined to take up his permanent work as a teacher, two other events were to affect his life deeply. The first of these was the death of his mother, and his consequent closer acquaintance with his father. His mother died in November, 1881, while he was working for his degree of Master of Arts. Like every youth who has not yet come upon the prostrating fact of death, he had lived as though the things of this life were unchanging. Alone, his spiritual devastation appalled him. He could not be comforted. When he had completed his work for the master's degree, he decided upon a year at Oxford, in the hope of pursuing some courses in English, and, through the new world in which he should live, of renewing his interest in life. He went to Oxford, but found no courses of importance in the field of English offered for that year. By good fortune he did find there Samuel Brearley, who had graduated from Harvard College a few years ahead of him. Brearley felt deeply the grief that enthralled Briggs, and did everything within his power to give him comfort.

But with the outlook in the university so discouraging, he decided not to remain in Oxford. His

father and he would try traveling on the Continent. In the course of the year he discovered what his father was like. As a boy at home, he had looked upon his father as a kindly, self-effacing person who was deeply concerned about the welfare of his family, his congregation, and his country. But here in the night-time of a common grief, he discovered that his father was an interesting man with whom one might become intimate. They traveled together; together they made plans for further travel. Sometimes they read together. The father was "a good scout" who at seventy-two was enthusiastic over most things in the world about him. Daily the son felt more and more of the solid earth under his feet. When he returned to America he was not only refreshed and heartened, but newly devoted to this vigorous, inquiring old father who wanted to know as much of the world as possible, and who lived on for more than a dozen years to realize much of his wish.

The other event of importance grew directly from Le Baron Briggs's experience as a young tutor. In 1879 he agreed to repeat his Harvard course in Greek for the newly organized Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women that was later to become Radcliffe College. On the opening day

of the year, when he met his class, the young women were humiliated and indignant that they should have such a youth foisted off on them when they had been led to expect a real professor! At the end of the hour, after he had sidled humbly from the room, one bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked young girl named Mary de Quedville—described by a fellow-student as the most fascinating girl she had ever known—headed the small group in an indignation meeting. On September 5, 1883, in Christ Church, Cambridge, she and this presumptuous youth were united in marriage.

VI

He brought to his permanent appointment, then, the experience of an undramatic but long and rich youth. All about him he had seen men and institutions that appeared important. There were the sons of the Pilgrims—sons of men and women who had braved the seas and the reasonably certain death of a first winter in Massachusetts in order that they might perpetuate an idea sacred to them. There were his Grandfather Russell's household and personal record to give immediate dignity to life. There were the active harbor cities of his community —organized means of adventurous experience; there

was the most venerable of American universities in the ferment of making for itself a new destiny; and under his own early roof were his father and mother deeply in earnest about salvaging the human race. These must be some of the real things of life, must they not?

And yet they were not quite real enough. He must touch some institutions intimately himself; he must experience them, and—perhaps he would not admit it—they must experience him. In his desperate boyish efforts to see as far as the elders who beset him on every hand, he developed a clairvoyance which enabled him to see much farther. He saw much which he, in his extreme modesty, could do. So he set out—with a head full of observations on education; with a spirit chastened by grief and enriched through friendship; and in the company of an appreciative, sensitive wife who was destined to go with him through his entire career, and give him heartening counsel, criticize his official reports, and make his household a place to be sought by the unspoiled and the aspiring.

CHAPTER III

A Variant in the Professor's Chair

I

FOR many a man in official position, life is a more or less ordered sequence. He gives up a seat in the state legislature to become a Congressman; and he resigns his place in the House of Representatives to become a United States Senator or a member of the Cabinet. Or he leaves a professorship in chemistry or economics or philosophy in order to become a college president; and after he has served some college for a period, if he is ambitious and tactful, he gives up this place and moves on to some impressive university. But for Dean Briggs, life was not a sequence, but an accumulation. He added new positions and new duties without giving up any of the old ones—until he approached the time when he was ready to give up all.

He began making these accumulations by engaging in what most people would look upon as the least influential occupation one could imagine; he

became a teacher of English composition. How was a slender boy, engaged in the deadening business of teaching college freshmen to write straight sentences and to use punctuation marks with a degree of consistency, ever to work his way into the life of his entire country? Yet his work as a teacher has already become an important part of the history of education in America, and sooner or later it will be recognized as having been a significant part of the history of American letters.

As far back as 1872, Professor Adams Sherman Hill had been brought to Harvard to supplement the scholarly work already being done in the Department of English. President Eliot, then a young man of thirty-eight, foresaw a greatly increased attendance at the colleges and universities of the country. Not only that; he felt sure that this attendance would be made up in large part of men and women who would work in the sciences and other subjects not linguistic or literary. Anyhow, the older literary training was rigid and artificial, and altogether too exclusively designed for state occasions. He would have students forearmed with such a working acquaintance with their mother tongue as would serve them unaffectedly in their daily lives.

So Professor Hill was brought to the College

Yard to see whether or not such an acquaintance was possible. He was a thin, cadaverous man who had received his bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1853—in President Eliot's class. He had subsequently studied law, and then had worked on the New York *Tribune* under Horace Greeley. When he came to the college he shared President Eliot's belief that students should write with direct clearness, and his experience in a newspaper office had led him to the somewhat unorthodox conviction that there were certain practicable means of approaching this end. At first he had no sense of discipline—as the word is used pedagogically—and the students, carrying on the easy traditions of a course that had been under the direction of young men who taught transiently, were not inclined to look upon his work with overmuch seriousness. In truth, they sometimes hummed pleasant academic melodies while he read a man's themes in the classroom. He encountered, in addition, no little unfriendliness in influential quarters. But despite his frail health and the uninviting atmosphere, he persisted. By the early 'eighties he had made such progress that both he and President Eliot believed the time had come when he should have associated with him more men than a mere young assistant or two. By 1883

he had gathered about him three young men who were to undertake the further development of his "idea." These were Barrett Wendell, W. B. Shubrick Clymer, and Le Baron Russell Briggs.

II

For those who believe that a new idea is heralded through the world with the blare of trumpets and the impatient approval of the populace, there is little of interest in Dean Briggs's first years as a teacher. But for those who delight to see a man of some vision edge his way into a position of general acceptability, there should be adequate fascination.

In 1883–84 the prescribed course in English, at that time required in the sophomore year, was officially in the hands of Professor Hill and Mr. Briggs; but on account of Professor Hill's poor health, he delegated most of his authority to his young associate. From Dean Briggs's boyhood to the day of his withdrawal from all university duties he always gave people the impression that he was timid; yet quite as consistently, whenever anyone came to him with a difficult task, he was always ready to undertake it. So when Professor Hill handed him classroom lectures and said, "I am too sick to meet the class, and you must lecture to them,"

he accepted the difficult commission and read valiantly. Students who were in the course at that time were so impressed by the pink-faced boy's efforts to fill the mature man's shoes, and by his deep, almost desperate earnestness, that they listened to him with more respect than they had supposed they could command.

At the end of that year he was to have opportunity to show just how a new idea begins its earthly journey. He and Professor Hill believed that the prescribed English should come at the beginning of a student's course rather than in the second year. They proposed a change. If the course came in the freshman year, it would help the student when he most needed help, and it would not break into his other studies after he had taken them up. To a young man's unclouded vision, that was clear beyond question. But he had to encounter minds made heavy by too much wisdom. The older members of the faculty were engaged in a mad scramble to enlist recruits among the freshmen for their elective courses. They did not want Professor Hill and this young upstart to put a prescribed course back into the open field and hamper the early beginnings of a right pursuit of truth. And the young man had the audacity to ask for something more! He

wished to make the prescribed English into a course that would meet three times a week instead of two. Some of the distinguished members of the faculty became savage. But Professor Hill and young Briggs promised that should the course be pushed back to the freshman year and made a three-hour course, they would see to it that no work outside the classroom was required for the third hour. Upon that basis the change was made.

Now how could this transaction, by any stretch of the imagination, become a matter of national significance? The answer is to be found in certain theories of democracy cherished by the American people. They wanted as much education as possible for everybody. They wanted their children well taught in the colleges and universities. Harvard, with an honorable past, attracted many men who expected to do college teaching. These men, when they went to their posts all over the country, carried with them, as every college graduate must, some memory of the way things were done by their Alma Mater. And when these newer institutions sought a means of preventing students from disgracing themselves every time they put pen to paper, they almost invariably made use of Harvard's experience and established prescribed freshman courses in writing.

A glance at the college and university catalogues of America will reveal how few of the institutions did not follow the precedent which young Briggs, after much opposition, was allowed to establish.

This simple change in the schedule of the university, moreover, enabled him to start another variation in college practice. He had agreed not to require outside work of students for the third hour of his course. He must, then, devise means of occupying this hour profitably. In casting about, he discovered, among other things, how little the freshmen knew about the college and the world in which they lived. They needed not merely courses in Greek and chemistry and German; they needed general information. They knew little about the social machine, and they did not feel their place in it with sufficient distinctness to give import to their college work. He would make use of this "third hour" by trying to give his freshmen some glimpses of the world in which they supposedly lived. And he called on others to assist him.

This practice likewise spread throughout the country. At first, many teachers in the colleges where young instructors in English attempted to carry out the practice declared vehemently that it was "unscholarly" and that it did not "fit into"

any well-organized curriculum. In fact, it did fit into any curriculum that was not too well organized! And to-day, helping the freshman to orient himself is so generally regarded as a necessary part of a college education, that it is accepted as though colleges had always fostered the idea. The sequence is clear enough: first, occasional hours were devoted to what a freshman should know; then regular hours; then a separate one-hour course—in many colleges —with compiled volumes of liberalizing essays; then full-fledged courses in "orientation" in which freshmen are brought face to face not only with the world, but with the universe! Whatever else may be said about college freshmen to-day, they must be more alert than they were obliged to be thirty or forty years ago.

But see how Briggs and Wendell, working together, were able to enter still further into the educational life of America. The pushing of the prescribed course back to the freshman year inevitably left one sophomore class, that of the year 1884–85, without the customary instruction in English. So Barrett Wendell, under the direction of Professor Hill, undertook to give for the sophomores the identical course, so far as possible, that Le Baron R. Briggs, under the same direction, was

giving for the freshmen. It was in that year also that Wendell first offered English 12, an advanced course in writing that soon took a place next to Professor Hill's English 5 as a magnet for those who wished to learn whether they had any capacity as writers. While he was laboring with his classes that year he "invented" the daily theme. Although he was in his last years looked upon as something of a tory, he was as a youth and as a young teacher rebellious enough; and he rebelled against the incessant practice of imitating the stiff eloquence and, in some instances at least, the stiffer poetry of New England. He had kept a diary himself, and had profited by the daily writing. Why should not students write a little each day? From Briggs's practice of discussing many matters with the freshmen, he completed the idea: he would have his students look squarely at some little part of the world, try to catch the color or flavor of what they saw, and then write as significantly as possible. Longer themes of one kind or another were not to be given up, but if men were ever to write with any flexibility, they must have a certain amount of daily practice with a variety of manageable subjects.

Wendell's idea, which was closely akin to the entire conception of the freshman course as Briggs

was developing it, likewise went to every part of the country. The idea had the good fortune, as Briggs's ideas had, of coming to birth at the time when institutions everywhere were drawing upon Harvard heavily in their efforts to establish adequate courses. Some years later, after the freshman course had been perfected by the touch of many skilled hands, the demand for information about it became so great that two of the men then teaching in it published a book in which the methods of the course were set forth in detail.[1] Teachers in hundreds of colleges wanted to know more about this method of helping men to see clearly and to write directly. Newspaper editors rejoiced that college men were learning to write straight sentences; and magazines and weeklies discussed the educational value of the "daily theme eye."

A "literary movement" is always too complex to be explained simply. Men, moreover, who find themselves better off as a result of any such movement, are pleased to feel that their increased well-being has emanated from their own virgin genius. Least of all are they willing to admit that men in an institution of learning have had anything to do with

[1] Copeland and Rideout, *Freshman English and Theme Correcting in Harvard College.* 1901.

it. But when some one sits down to explain why in the early years of the twentieth century the younger readers and writers of America began to concern themselves with something less hollow, less conventionally formed than much of the literature conveniently styled "New England," he cannot leave Briggs and Wendell out of consideration. They trained men to look at the world with their own eyes, and to write directly and honestly about what they saw, without regard for the traditional ways of looking at things. The men thus trained went all over the country to teach in the colleges and universities, and they carried with them the gospel that the world right where one lives is interesting if one will only look and think. And the students whom these men in turn trained went away from college by the thousands—and later by the tens of thousands—to find joy in the same unaffected experience. Only the blind can say that this fact has had nothing to do with our attempt, more or less national, to develop a literary art directly from the soil.

III

The firm, unbroken friendship of Briggs and Wendell was puzzling to most people and amusing

to many; for at first glance they seemed more unlike than any other two people in the world. Wendell gave strangers the impression that he was a cad. He cultivated a very "un-American" beard. He parted his hair very precisely in the middle. He talked in a roaming, high-pitched voice that seemed to be artificially modulated to produce the effect of British speech. He carried his walking-stick on his little finger. He paced back and forth on the platform of his lecture-room and twirled his watch-chain—and sometimes his watch—while he talked about "the Puritans of 1642, who feared that they might be damned for thinking," and the followers of Charles II in 1660, "who weren't certain that they were not going to be damned, but who were certain that they weren't going to be damned fools"! He participated in academic pomp with an air of such grave solemnity that when he once stepped upon the bottom of his gown as he mounted the platform to speak in a foreign university the onlookers were more amused than sympathetic. Usually when a whole-hearted country boy first encountered this very professorial professor, he came away with a numb feeling that there never had been much in the world worth doing, and that most of this had already been done—no small part

of it by Wendell himself. No man ever lived who could build round himself a more formidable outwork of somebody else.

With such a man Briggs would seem to have little in common. He himself was plain in appearance, almost to the extent of distinction. He spoke as simply as he acted, "his voice wrinkling with kindness." [1] He cared not at all for the pomp of academic life, and always seemed out of place when he participated in it. He had the enthusiasm of youth, and always he was attracting young men to him by the glow of hope in his face. If one wished to remember for a lifetime the value of contrast on the stage, one needed only to catch a glimpse of these two men as they chanced to talk together for a moment in the College Yard.

Yet, in truth, the two had much in common. When Wendell put aside his "defense," he was a man of great simplicity, irreproachable motives, and profound devotion. So the two could work together in great good will. They were constantly going over their common and individual problems with such effect that President Lowell once remarked, at a dinner in honor of Dean Briggs, that if they had

[1] I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to some freshman, unknown to me, for these descriptive words.

never done anything more than work out their revolutionizing methods of teaching English, they would have had all the glory two men should require in a lifetime. After Briggs had taught freshmen for four or five years and Wendell had taught upper classmen in English 12, they decided to trade courses for a year, just for the fun of it. As a consequence, Wendell had to prepare a new series of lectures, and he tried to express the chief problems of writing more directly than the earlier teachers of rhetoric had done. These lectures were given not only before the freshmen, but before audiences at the Lowell Institute in Boston, and then appeared in 1891 as the well-known volume called *English Composition.*

The men, however, were steadily developing in very different directions. Wendell was interested in writing. He wrote a novel or two, a play, and numerous essays, in addition to his more professional contributions. Briggs, it is true, was also interested in writing—and he could write with a warmth, a subtlety, and a finish quite beyond the power of Wendell—but he was more deeply interested in the problems which young men, simply as young men, brought to him in the conference room. Both men continued to teach until they reached the age of

retirement,[1] but Wendell was a teacher plus a writer, and Briggs was primarily a teacher plus a counselor.

IV

For a decade or more after young Briggs joined the Department of English, his appearance of extreme youth affected his relations with the students. True, he had been made an assistant professor in 1885, and a full professor in 1890. But neither the dignities nor the responsibilities of his academic post could rob him of an easy manner of movement and a boyish light in the face—the despair of every photographer and portrait painter—which were exceptional behind the professor's desk.

One September in the late 'eighties, the freshmen assembled in the "cockpit" in Sever Hall to hear the first assignments in English A; but there was no professor in the room. While they waited they talked expectantly of the impending clash with the sophomores. Just as the hour struck, who should walk in, instead of a professor, but—as they thought—a shrewd-eyed member of the sophomore class who

[1] When Wendell retired in 1917, Dean Briggs wrote a penetrating, sympathetic appreciation of him and his work. See the *Harvard Crimson* for March 30, 1917.

took his seat at the professor's desk with a certain nervousness which revealed the fact that he did not belong there! Quickly a group of freshmen consulted together to devise the most efficacious means of dealing with the intruder, who could not conceal the fact that he had something up his sleeve. But before they could move down the aisle to throw him out, a man who was taking the course a second time said: "Be careful what you try on him. He's the prof."

When a member of the class of 1892, a tall, slender youth from the Middle West, attended his first meeting of English A he likewise found no professor. As he sat there in the buzzing animation which pleasantly assured him that he was at last in college, two men in the front of the room, not far from the platform, stood and talked with evident delight about some concern of their own. Never, he thought, had he seen two men of college age with such pink, baby-like skin. They were very amusing. But soon one of them walked toward the door. The other mounted the platform and took charge of the class. Much later he learned that the one who left the room was the philosopher, Josiah Royce.

Interestingly enough, this appearance of extreme youth in Dean Briggs—and he carried some of it

well into his sixties—was not a handicap. The men came to class on the first day of college, were startled, took a second look, and decided that he would do. In order to distinguish him conveniently from his older brother, who for a time taught mathematics in the college, he was called Little Briggs. In his unaffected character there was enough of a young man's frankness to invite youthful and frank questions. One day, in the course of a classroom discussion of style, he made some passing reference to the style of the *Odyssey*. At the next meeting of the course he began his lecture by saying: "The other day I spoke of the style of the *Odyssey*. In order that you may see just what I had in mind, I have brought a copy with me, and if I may have your attention I shall translate a little."

He read unhesitatingly and smoothly — so smoothly, in fact, that one of two men who sat together said, "I'll bet you ten bucks he's reading that from a pony." The bet was promptly taken, and at the end of the hour the two walked down to the desk to secure the necessary evidence. "We have a bet," one of them explained, "that you read that Greek from a translation, and we wanted to see the book." The young assistant professor was amused by such candor and, with a broad smile

playing over his face, handed them the Greek text.

But students were discreet in the liberties they took with him. In his open character there was an element of the inscrutable—an element which did not diminish as he grew older—and anyone who contemplated anything wantonly disrespectful usually took a second or a third look at the man and decided to abandon the deviltry. Anyhow, what would be the fun of offending anyone who was always trying so unselfishly to make himself useful?

All the while he was developing into a teacher of singular power. He did not look like a professor; he did not act like one. Yet students talked earnestly about his work in a manner quite alien to customary conversation, and they began to turn to him when they were baffled by matters of personal conduct. Here was a man who opened a new world before them, and they became aware of it and of themselves, and of an inescapable relation which they bore to their fellows. In the glow of a higher pulsation they saw that the world was interesting. The great commonplaces lost their commonplaceness and became great.

Of course he wanted them to write. But how could they write anything worth the effort unless they saw the world with a robust enjoyment?

Largely as a result of his conviction and of his strategic position, which made the sending forth of disciples easy, this view is another of his now so generally accepted that it is taken for granted. But the way was not easy for Professor Briggs. He had to bring an academic community to an acceptance of a more generous definition of the teacher of English, and he had to devise means of bringing the quickened world and the students face to face when the students' minds were receptive and potentially creative. He walked with men, and they learned how to see. He read to them, and in the few quiet hours of their noisy lives they became eager to read. He discussed the interesting puzzles of life, and they wanted to think. While they were in that blessed state, he sometimes asked them to write. Little wonder that they wrote with animation, and occasionally with promise of power! Little wonder that they turned constantly for assurance to this man who could see from youth's point of view!

He developed a variety of courses. Regularly he gave a part of the lectures in English 28, a "general survey course" which the undergraduates called "seeing literature." Later, too, he offered a course in Browning. And for thirty-six years he offered a course in the history and principles of

versification. This course was primarily for graduate students who wished to write verse under criticism and for men who expected to teach in colleges and universities. It was elected by many students, and it served as a model in numerous colleges of the country.

It was, however, in another course that he came to his greatest eminence as a teacher. Professor Hill, who had always held to the belief that college and university courses should influence a man after he leaves college, early put his theory into practice in a course which was designed especially for men who planned to follow a career—if they could make one —in letters or in the more important positions in the newspaper world. But in the first years of the twentieth century he was an old man, feeble in health. He had, according to those nearest him, long looked like an old man, and his health had always been precarious. But now it was evident that he could not teach much longer. When he sat at his classroom desk in Sever Hall, his very white hair and his very white beard combed neatly, and read to the undergraduates from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," the "Intimations," or "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," his clear but somewhat unsteady voice seemed to speak from a receding world. At this

time Dean Briggs was giving English 12, Barrett Wendell's course in writing, which had been remade into a course of limited size. So it was but logical that he should succeed Professor Hill in the giving of English 5. At first Professor Hill reduced his course to a half-course in composition and a half-course in literature, and the men who wished a full course in writing were directed to Dean Briggs's English 12; then Professor Hill offered only a half-year in all; and then Dean Briggs took the course over formally.[1]

V

When he began regularly to offer English 5—he had offered the course once in the 'nineties when Professor Hill was in especially poor health—the task which confronted him exacted new standards of effectiveness. The course was primarily professional in character. Each year there were thirty men—chiefly mature graduate students. Often

[1] In 1904 he succeeded Professor Hill as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory. This professorship was endowed by Nicholas Boylston in 1771, and established by the president and fellows in 1804. The holders of it have been John Quincy Adams, 1806-1809; Joseph McKean, 1809-1818; Edward Tyrrel Channing, 1819-1851; Francis James Child, 1851-1876; Adams Sherman Hill, 1876-1910 (emeritus after 1904); Le Baron Russell Briggs, 1904-1925; Charles Townsend Copeland, 1925— .

men came who had already written and published stories, essays, and verse. He was to be tested as an educator participating directly in the literary world.

Especially was the time a difficult one. When he and Barrett Wendell first offered their courses in composition, wise persons skeptically asked, "But can writing be taught?"—a kind of question that, through recorded time, has been raised whenever anyone has tried to do something in a new way. Neither Dean Briggs nor Barrett Wendell ever believed that writing could be "taught," but both believed that under the right conditions something could be learned—although Barrett Wendell in moments of depression doubted whether anybody could learn anything! They tried to discover and provide the right conditions. Doing this seemed such a simple matter that many casual-minded persons jumped to the conclusion that writing could be taught by anybody. As a result, there sprang up all sorts of flimsy courses in all sorts of places. The aspiring were invited to take a course in "How to be a genius: taught in twenty lessons"—taught, probably, by a man who himself could not write. Financially foresighted men and women seized upon a perfectly sound idea and made it false through ex-

ploitation. "What others have done, anybody can do"—and make money at it!

Now with all of the clamor for courses that would produce marketable wares at once, how would Dean Briggs conduct his course? Would he stick to the models of the ages and disregard men's inclination to make immediate profit from their learning, or would he yield, and convert the course into a factory designed to "lick into shape" for magazine editors the immature work of his students? As a matter of fact, he did neither. He had a way of his own.

The actual operation of the course was so simple that it seemed not to be based upon any theory at all. The members ranged in age from twenty or twenty-one to forty or forty-five, although most of them were in the middle or late twenties. They came from Maine, New York, Ohio, Kansas, Texas, California—men of all mental attitudes, but most of them with a little of the divine terror in their eyes. They brought novels half completed—sometimes a man brought two or three; they brought volumes of unpublished verse; they brought essays on the times; they brought shadowy outlines of "the great American" novel; they brought sometimes only a vague but persistent feeling that they must write.

These men were asked to submit something imme-

diately. The Dean began "dipping into" these themes at once; he was as eager as a boy at Christmas to see what he had. And then after that first, somewhat preliminary theme, something substantial must come in as often as once a fortnight. It might be a section of a novel; an essay; a short story; a sonnet sequence; a group of three or four lyrics. Opportunity was at hand. If the muse had been calling—or even whispering—no one now had an excuse for refusing to follow.

When these contributions came in, they were not turned over to some competent assistant for reading and correcting; every one of them was read by Dean Briggs himself—and commented upon in red ink! A freshman with a bent for the statistical method once computed that Dean Briggs had written enough comment on other men's work to fill more volumes than H. G. Wells had written. And most of it, he believed, was infinitely more interesting.

Twice a week the thirty men and their leader met together for an hour of criticism. He read from the work he had examined, called for discussion of it, sometimes discussed it with great earnestness or fascinating subtlety himself, and then asked the men to write at once, before they left the room, a criticism of what he had read; sometimes, of the classroom

discussion. At the next meeting he read some of this criticism—he had carefully corrected it in the intervening days—and some of the longer, more pretentious themes. Occasionally, in the course of the hour, personal alignments and schools of criticism began to appear. The Dean then shrewdly refrained from having further oral criticism until a variety of new themes had broken up the too definite alignments. A man could not so easily tell who was criticizing his work when the criticism was in writing, there flat on the desk under the Dean's kindly scrutinizing eye. Besides, the effort to identify criticism wholly from "internal evidence" was an exhilarating exercise in style. The course and the minds of the men in it must be kept mobile.

For most men, the essence of the course was concentrated in the conferences, which, through some magic, the Dean always found time for. Slipped down in one of the chairs by the long table in his office, he went casually through the themes a man had written, and talked with intimate earnestness about structure and good taste and stylistic detail. Sometimes a young novelist who had come with a suitcase full of stories, hoping at last to find an appreciator of his genius, talked pleasantly with the Dean for a half-hour, and then, without telling him

that he had ever written stories, decided in the secrecy of his own heart to burn everything he had written and begin all over again. Sometimes a country youth from some more or less rural college, after having long feared that he should never be able to find good story material, discovered here in twenty minutes that he had lived all his life in a region made of the stuff of romance. Sometimes a young poet gained the impression that he was already on the way, and needed most of all a hardy self-discipline.

It was a pleasant half-hour, little like a "course" in anything. "It was amazing, too," one of his students now in an editorial chair once observed concerning these conferences, "how unremarked the talk gradually shifted from our immediate concerns —to books, apposite anecdotes of New England tradition, questions of our taste, and invariably of our health, our eyes, and our sleep. A victim of insomnia himself, the Dean would offer us a serviceable remedy of his own. 'Some dull, quiet book— Thomson's *Seasons* or Young's *Night Thoughts*— will send you off in no time.' There would come a tap at the door, and our successor would enter. Not until crossing the Yard would we recall that the one question which above all others we had wished to

ask, the question of our writing, and whether we were justified in making it a career, remained and always remained for each of us to answer."

But the interesting fact is that the question did remain. Under the beneficent but penetrating watchfulness of the Dean, one felt impelled constantly to ask that question. If a man had ever dreamed of producing an impression on the world by means of merely acceptable mediocre work, he put that thought aside as if it were a plan for some dastardly crime. He experienced an incessant scrutiny of soul; and in the process he made acquaintance with all of his literary vices and occasionally with some neglected inspiriting virtue. It was a liberal education just to be going around with oneself in that frame of mind day after day.

VI

If we observe a little more intimately the characteristics which made Dean Briggs a teacher of subtle power, we must recognize, first of all, his sensitiveness to the receptive moment. He felt in those he taught the slightest inclination toward that state of pleasurable suspense in which suggestion from anyone has significance. When his little daughter, full of excitement, was just ready to hurry off to a

children's party, he rejoiced with her and then admonished her in a word, "Sit up straight, use good English, and keep your temper." And she never forgot the admonition, even after the details of the parties had slipped from her memory. While he was president of Radcliffe College he would sit down with the hundred or more freshman girls and say: "Now you understand that what goes on here is strictly private. No newspaper reporters are present, and I shall ask you not to give reporters any information after the meeting is over." The girls, thrilled with curiosity at the confidential character of the meeting, listened with bated breath while he gave them very wise, very sensible, very fatherly advice about college. On the opening day of one year at Harvard, he went, according to custom, to meet the freshmen and talk matters over. As he entered the room, they were expectant. He walked to the platform and turned to address them. For a moment, the silence was absolute. Then he remarked quite casually, "President Eliot spells his name E-l-i-o-t; one *l* and one *t*." Twenty years later a distinguished son of the college declared that that incidental remark at the dramatic moment was not only his clearest recollection of college, but the most impressive suggestion he had ever received on the

importance of accuracy in all matters. The Dean was constantly ahead of his class throughout the recitation period, keeping the minds of his students expectant and receptive.

He possessed, in the second place, a lively tolerance. His belief that an individual life is precious, of course colored his entire official career; but its appositeness was peculiar in a class where men discussed all sorts of questions, maintained all sorts of artistic theories, and looked upon themselves as possessing all sorts of literary genius. Dean Briggs was ready to read whatever one wished to write, and to hear every man's defense of himself when defense became relevant. In such a course as English 5, men are much less inclined to defer to anyone else than might be supposed. They come from a wide variety of institutions. They enter the course with heads full of literary theory—partly assimilated—which they acquired in these other institutions, and this more or less neglected acquisition now assumes amazingly important proportions in the presence of this new master and these unappreciative, competitive fellow-students! Among them are always some who unwittingly irritate their fellows into a belligerent state of mind. And there are always a few unhappy spirits who write openly against the other members

of the course and against the man who presides over it and must read and grade all the themes. For twenty years he read the themes written by all such men, suffered in silence, and offered unprejudiced criticism.

But hear the private testimony of two men very prominent in the renaissance of poetry which we are now experiencing. "I know," one of them has said, "that much of what I wrote for him in the revolutionary exuberance of my undergraduate days must have been hostile to his opinions. He never protested, he never tried 'to set me right' except in one case where it was obvious that I was being untrue to my own standards. If I do not now blush in recalling this incident, it is because, thanks to the Dean's understanding of human motives, there is no necessity for it. Toward the end of my junior year I fell into one of those youthful moods of despair—no doubt deepened by the war—when we perversely try to challenge and wound our best friends, to see how far we can go, careless of the consequences if we go too far. Under this evil spell I wrote some verses which were dull and blasphemous. Of course, as soon as I had handed them in I was aghast; but there was then nothing to do. I attended class sick at heart. A fortnight went by

and my verses came back with my other themes. The comment on them ran something like this: 'Competent verse. A lapse of taste unusual with you.' Another reason for my not blushing now would be that I exhausted a life's worth of blushes at that time."

The other was much more openly a revolutionist: "I took Dean Briggs's courses in versification and composition at the time when I was most turbulent and least patient in all questions of form and content. I was encouraged and reinforced in my attitude by at least two other literary 'radicals.' We wrote and fought and defended one another with all the scorn and gusto at our command, not displeased by the resultant consternation in the class. But from the very first, Dean Briggs paid my work, however wild, the high compliment of reading it seriously and as sympathetically as possible. Such respect could only beget respect; even when our conclusions were diametrically opposed (for I was then very young), I knew that his decisions were neither hasty nor intolerant.

"The effect of such criticism was more profound than I then suspected, yet so subtle that even now I cannot define it easily. It taught me somehow that writing could be the most serious thing in the world,

and should not be a pastime or a decoration. It taught me, too, the obvious lesson that there are other attitudes in the world besides my own and that one can be tolerant though personally unflinching."

But his tolerance was more than mere tolerance; it was a positive and glowing interest in every man who sat in his classroom. He believed, with William James, that "our undisciplinables are our proudest product." He looked at the startling men before him with something of the wonder and amused delight of a child. How interesting to see them unfold —in case they fortunately did! From his most respected Harvard teacher, Professor George Herbert Palmer, he learned long before Professor Palmer had begun to commit his wisdom to print that "the wholesomeness of example is tested by inquiring whether it develops differences or has only the power of duplicating the original." No one expects ever to see a duplicate of Dean Briggs, and he himself would be the last to wish it. He found too much pleasure in watching for a rightly self-disciplined natural variety.

In English 5 alone there came under his influence in twenty years, six hundred men. Only a complete roster of all who sat at the bewhittled plank desks in Sever Hall would show adequately how he had

respected and nurtured the individual. Many of these men became university teachers and perpetuated literary tradition in that way rather than by writing. But among those who took up a career in letters—and it must be remembered that the oldest of these men have been away from the classroom not longer than twenty years—it is possible to make up such lists as the following. Possibly one or two of these were in Dean Briggs's course in versification rather than the course in composition: Alan Seeger, Stuart P. Sherman, Harry James Smith, Paxton Hibben, Conrad Aiken, Edward Sheldon, Hermann Hagedorn, Wilson Follett, H. H. Knibbs, H. T. Pulsifer, Clayton Ernst, Earl Biggers, Thomas Ybarra, Robert Benchley, Frederick L. Allen, E. E. Cummings, Frederick Orin Bartlett, Kenneth Brown, Joseph Auslander, Lawrence Mott, Elliott C. Lincoln, Percy Marks, Foster Damon, Henry A. Bellows, Henry Beston (Sheahan), George Boas, Odell Shepard, Gordon King, Robert Cutler, John Gilman D'Arcy Paul, Bruce Weirick, John Bakeless, Edward A. Weeks, Nicholas Roosevelt, Bernard De Voto, John Dos Passos, Robert Hillyer. Surely the Dean could not be accused of "duplicating the original."

A third of his characteristics as a teacher was a

very high, impelling conscientiousness. No man ever set a better example of doing hard work with serene joy. He was never without themes to grade. When the Christmas or the Easter vacation brought him an opportunity to steal away for a few days to the quiet of the country, he always carried with him a great bundle of stories and essays and verse that had come to his desk. He could read themes with a relish when he was too tired to do anything else. Occasionally his secretary, when recording the grades and the principal comments made on themes, found a sentence which stopped in the middle of a word—because the demands for adequate sleep had been too great. But he never stopped for lack of interest. "I have taught English composition for forty-two years," he one day remarked, "and I have often been tired in it; but I have never been tired of it." It is conceivable that under sufficient pressure he might have delegated some of his other work to somebody; it is inconceivable that he might ever have delegated to anyone the reading of his important themes.

But his conscientiousness was not restricted to the mere business of getting his work done. It entered into the humblest comment that he wrote. One of his chief methods of helping a man to perfect his

style was the method of excision, and excision must be carried on with conscientiousness. "Clearness, precision, life," one of his former students wrote—"these were what he demanded of an English style, and his method of securing them was to trim out the dead wood. He knew that in the work of graduates as well as in that of freshmen there was much need of this kind of forestry, because among the older men carelessness had superseded ignorance, with quite the same result. So without talking much about style, he used his pruning-hook and made it." Carried through by many a teacher, this process would be deadly; carried through with a high, almost desperate conscientiousness by Dean Briggs, it was the most invigorating process imaginable.

Of course, in such a process, he revealed his favorite taboos. Usually his special feeling against a word was based upon its outwornness. Either for amusement or for serious profit his students were always compiling lists of these tabooed words. One notebook for 1923 revealed this modest list of "words which need a rest": *Sane, tense* (the adjective), *purring engines, forceful, convincing, slowly but surely, type* (as applied to characters), *vivid, colorful, realize* ("when you mean *know*"), *shivers of the spine, brain and brawn, along the line of, hec-*

tic, poignant, outstanding, appeal (as a noun), *vital, tryout, red-blooded.*

With such elementary details the pruning began. It extended to phrases that could be made more compact, to infinitives that stood too much in a row, to paragraphs that rolled along with too much verbal fury. Frequently students at first thought he was too deeply concerned with this part of his "method." "Sometimes," one of them said fifteen years after he had left the university, "I thought that here was something of the figure of a Don Quixote dashing from windmill to windmill, followed by the faithful Sanchos of the class, utterly devoted, and convinced that when the windmills were once conquered, a solid substance of achievement would be theirs." Then he adds the sufficient comment: "But now, after more than a dozen years, two of which were spent in a foreign university, I believe he is the greatest teacher I ever sat under."

It must not be inferred that his method was applicable only to details. The same conscientiousness extended to the most comprehensive questions of structure. During the year, while Jones was handing in a novel chapter by chapter, Dean Briggs not only kept the plan of the story in mind, but knew in detail every preceding chapter. He remembered

every essay in Smith's series, and every sonnet in Brown's sequence. Where he kept all of his miscellaneous memories, no one has ever been able to make out; but he kept them. A student in his freshman course in the late 'eighties became a member of the faculty of Columbia University. At the inauguration of Miss Marion E. Park as president of Bryn Mawr College in 1922, it chanced that this professor from Columbia and Dean Briggs met, thirty-three years after having met in the classroom. As they walked together, Dean Briggs took him by the arm and said: "You wrote a theme for me once about the meter of *Piers Plowman* and Meredith's *Love in the Valley*. I remember thinking that the comparison," etc., etc.

Constantly he was leafing through bundles of themes in the hope that he might find evidence of originality in conception, in structure, or in phrase. "He made the ambitious youngster, glorying in some achieved phrase, feel confident that his triumph would not pass unnoticed." He stopped men in the Yard to tell them how much he appreciated something they had submitted; sometimes he went to the trouble of calling them on the telephone. Some of his contemporaries who possessed less of his youthful ardor thought he overestimated the origi-

nality of his disciples, but their smothering observations troubled him not at all. He was moved by a mighty earnestness. Perhaps he did give sophisticated young men the impression that he was fighting windmills. What did it matter? He felt the responsibility of passing on—and of adding to—a great tradition. He was a teacher through and through.

Often he protested that he was not a scholar. Just as often he underestimated his scholarly attainments. How he might or might not have contributed to scholarship had he not so early been submerged in official duties, no one can say. It is known that in the process his scholarship became something more admirable. It was, as one of his students once called it, "scholarship illuminated by character." He used it only as one of several means of helping students to a right understanding of themselves so that they could develop certain important mental habits of their own. He himself once admitted that his enforced practice of blending scholarship and humanity might, after all, point the way to a scholarship more effective than any unrelieved pursuit of research. "I wish I had more time for the early poets of England," he said; "but I haven't. And, anyhow, why isn't it just as 'scholarly' to establish a working

relation with a youth and help him to get surely on his own way, as it is to determine whether Chaucer started on his Italian journey at three or at three-thirty in the afternoon?"

Through his sensitiveness, his tolerance, and his high conscientiousness there was diffused an irrepressible strain of kindly humor. It was not mere pleasantry, mere agreeableness, valuable as these always are in the classroom; it approached highly distilled satire. There was something Attic in it; or if not Attic, then Gallic. Always his classroom was warm and cordial and intimate; yet always there was a trace of something "a bit acid—perhaps acid-sweet—like the cranberries of his Plymouth bogs. But it was also the atmosphere of New England hills bathed in clear sunlight, and a wind in your face blowing away the cobwebs of stolidity and stodginess."

He could not listen to a faculty meeting, a play, a street-car conversation, or a sermon without picking up some delicious morsel to roll under the tongue for a time. Nor could he read without pouncing upon every solemn inadvertence of an author. Never did he cease to enjoy telling how his intimate friend, Professor Royce, in the preface of his *The Philosophy of Loyalty,* had said: "Had I

not very early in my work as a student known Professor James, I doubt whether any *poor* book of of mine would ever have been written." (The italics are Dean Briggs's!) He laughed all afternoon when a supposed stenographic report of one of his own Phi Beta Kappa addresses brought him the amazing declaration, in the middle of one of his paragraphs, that "No man can be both an antenna and a cockroach." He smiled sympathetically—but with relish—when a sturdy boy in Ohio who wished to come to Harvard wrote, in explaining his previous college work, "You know there are two Heidelbergs; one in Ohio and one in Germany." And a person of great acuteness of hearing and of profound veracity has declared that she once heard him say: "Yes, President Eliot has humor, but it is unreliable."

Reasonably, then, it was to be expected that he would keep his students in emotional health by his cheerful, pleasantly acrid humor. They could not risk hasty inadvertence; they could not risk the over-picturesque; they could not risk taking themselves too seriously. Always those friendly but startling observations in red ink came back to one:

"This is as good as much that appears in *Life* and *Judge*; but it is not very good."

"Surely nobody's dialect is ever like this."

"Your story adds a new terror to coeducation."

"You make the straight crooked; anybody can do that."

"The safety of the nonchalantly inelegant humorist lies in not overdosing."

"Although this theme is short, it might well have been shorter."

"You commit an almost unpardonable offense in trying to get one more joke out of home brew."

"If it may be said of any writer that he writes not English but American, it may be truly said of you. One doesn't know where to begin or where to stop in the effort to purify your style, and ends by wondering whether purification wouldn't spoil it, and whether the slang substitute for the language you murder isn't your best hope of writing effectively. For your slang, though at times surfeiting, is often piquantly effective; and trying to better it is not unlike the work of the man who changed 'he was some punkins' to 'he was some pumpkins.' Let me merely raise in your mind (if I can) the question whether ingrained slang isn't more brilliant in the hundred yards than in the two-mile."

"I admit that this verse is *like* Milton, but somehow it lacks what lies behind Milton."

"Amphibious metaphors need watching."

"A very little of this goes a long way."

"These sonnets are as tough a sequence as I can remember seeing."

"Pretty hard sleddin'."

VII

After this incursion into analysis, however, we must come back to the somewhat indefinite but wholly valid explanation that here was a teacher who loved youth and who had a genius for letting youth love him. Instead of driving men through a period of discipline enforced by all the machinery of systematized education, he set men free; and when men experience any high kind of freedom they begin to discipline themselves—with more rigor than is possible in any external discipline. His students worked for him just as any eager young artist works for a respected master who is proud of his disciples.

When his former students chance to meet, the manner in which they get their heads together and talk things over can be compared only with the affectionate reminiscences of middle-aged sons who linger over some cherished eccentricity of their father. He would be filled with consternation if he knew how they talk over his dress, his speech, his abundant

wrinkles, his tricks with his eye-glasses, his pleasure in the cards from which he lectured, his mysterious symbols on the outside of themes,[1] his generous spirit, his humor. Invariably, however, they come round to their affection for him, and the zeal with which they worked in order that he need not be ashamed. And they write about him. "I never can think of that course" [English 5], wrote one of his former students to another at the time of his retirement, "without smiling at the Dean's appearance. Awkward, with trousers that needed pressing, and shoes —substantial, broad-toed Bostonian shoes—that needed a little polishing, he would come pleasantly into the classroom with the collar of his overcoat sagging far away from the back of his neck. After he had been talking to us for five minutes, he was as likely as not to have leaned against the blackboard and got chalk on back and sleeves. He was always draping himself over the desk, backing against some

[1] He used cryptic combinations of all the letters of the alphabet—or nearly all. At a dinner in his honor at the Harvard Club of Boston in June, 1925, a well-known writer arose and addressed him: "We have always wanted to know more about those WWW's, YUU's, WBZ's and the like that you used to put on the outside of our stories. Now that you are through using them, we should like to be let in on the secret. What are they? And what do they mean?" Dean Briggs arose, smiling to the top of his head, and replied: "They are private symbols I devised for indicating the quality of themes. They don't mean anything except to me!"

sharp angle of the wall, balancing himself on the pointer, working himself into some new and startling relation with the furniture. His more original contortions were watched by the class with an anxious fascination: it seemed as if somebody ought to get up and say, 'But, Mr. Briggs, that's the part of the blackboard where you copied out "Go, Lovely Rose" five minutes ago, and you're getting the lyric on your back.' He simply never gave a thought to how he looked to the men before him. You might laugh a little to see him sprawling all over the desk, with his head propped up on one elbow, but you could not help catching the contagion of an enthusiasm so real that it made him completely oblivious to his appearance."

And despite the coming of a less personal, less sensitive education in America, the intimate qualities in him upon which his students looked with an affectionate sense of possession were never forced into anything less fascinating, less expressive of his love of life and youth. An American novelist who had the unusual experience of re-entering Harvard as an undergraduate at the age of forty-seven has said:

"As a member of the class entering Harvard in 1896, I sat in Upper Massachusetts to listen to Dean Briggs. I saw before me a somewhat tall, angular

man who acted as embarrassed as though he were a freshman and we an academic body gathered to pass judgment upon him. His face was boyish, his gentle eyes were filled with smiles. He seemed to think it something of a joke that he should be here as Dean of the College.

"But when he began to speak, shyly and hesitatingly, we all came to attention. Self-sufficient as most of us felt at this time, we were thrown off our guard by the fact that he seemed more like one of us than an official of the university. His talk was not a lecture, but rather the reflections of one who was thinking out loud, wisely and with delicate humor.

"Almost thirty years later I became again a student at Harvard and enrolled in English 5, where I had the privilege once more of listening to Dean Briggs. During that interval he must have lectured to ten thousand undergraduates, at least, for he has taught uninterruptedly. One might expect such an experience to change the appearance of even an optimist. Yet when he edged into the classroom as though anxious to escape observation, I saw the identical man who stood before me in 1896. He was still shy, and his gentle eyes were still smiling. Moreover, it was evident the moment he began to

speak, that neither his faith in men nor his zest for his favorite subject had diminished one jot. He had not turned into either a cynic or a pedagogue. He had kept himself in a continuous state of renaissance."

It cannot be denied that a certain part of the work of the world may be done by men who labor under an external discipline. But the important work, the pioneering, can be done only by those whose discipline is from within, who will go farther, of their own accord, than anyone has gone before them. By moving men to go far, Dean Briggs performed the teacher's sublime function. His "method" may not be open to miscellaneous adoption; most good practices, because of the limitations of humankind, are not. But this fact should only make us see how altogether priceless his contribution has been. "For he was the shrewd genius who created creators."

CHAPTER IV

A Friend in the Dean's Office

I

TO any wisely cautious person it must have seemed that Le Baron R. Briggs, upon attaining his professorship in a respected university, was comfortably established for life. His interest in teaching was passionate, his position provided him with enough peculiarly exacting work to command the energy of a man with much more vigor than he possessed, and he enjoyed a success that was deeply gratifying because of its individual foundation. Yet when Professor Clement L. Smith stepped from the deanship of the college in 1891, the startling news made its way from Harvard Square that President Eliot had named young Professor Briggs as Dean Smith's successor, and that Mr. Briggs had accepted the appointment. By thus becoming the official sponsor for the undergraduates, he added his second important "accumulation"—the one which was destined to be more significant than any other which he undertook to carry.

If evidence were required to prove that Harvard is an institution of national importance, it could be found readily in the interest which the public has taken in just such matters as the elevation of Professor Briggs to his responsible new post. For there was an excited flutter of comment upon the fact that President Eliot, then very much on trial before the bar of public opinion for his radical changes at Harvard, had appointed a mere boy to the chief disciplinary position of the university. As a matter of fact, Dean Briggs at the time was thirty-five years old—as old as Mr. Eliot had been when he assumed the responsibilities of the presidency. But thirty-five is not very old, especially if the man appears to be only twenty-seven.

Certainly he did not look like a dean! Why had the president appointed him? Many years later, President Eliot himself, in a jovially reminiscent mood, gave his own reasons. He smiled at the manner in which the public had received the appointment, and admitted that it must have seemed hazardous to anyone who looked on casually. "But it was not hazardous," he explained. "My information about him was more complete than anyone supposed. I had known his father and his mother; so I was sure his inheritance was sound. I had seen

the man himself develop in a few years from a modest tutor to one of the able teachers of the university. I had discovered that he possessed a high honesty, a readiness to give himself to others, and a certain charming kindliness of character which made men at ease in his presence and encouraged them to be confidential with him. Of course, there was also a personal ground: I liked the man, and I was ready to believe that the feeling was not all on one side. I feel sure, however, that my chief reason for appointing him was this: I had discovered that students were going to him for counsel on every kind of problem, and I thought they might keep on going to him, even if he *was* Dean!"

The faculty received the appointment without enthusiasm. In truth, President Eliot has said that by making the appointment he incurred the displeasure of some members of the faculty and a few members of the governing boards—although he once cheerfully added that perhaps the displeasure was not greater than usual. Many of the professors, moreover, who were not personally displeased believed that the appointment was unwise. One of these was George Herbert Palmer. Thirty-five years later he said: "I believed then, as I still believe, that President Eliot possessed more of the

elements of greatness than any man I had ever known; and I had the utmost confidence in his judgment of men. But when he appointed Briggs to the deanship, it seemed to me nothing short of an absolute joke. Briggs had been in my classes, and I had found him a delightful man and a capital student. But how could this pink-faced boy, so shrinking that he could scarcely stand before men and express himself coherently, ever be expected to perform police duty for the college? He had not been appointed long, however, before I discovered that we were no longer on the police basis. He soon became the best Dean the college ever had."

The students had known him better than his colleagues had, and they welcomed him with rejoicing and assurance. Their first expression after the Board of Overseers had concurred in his appointment proved that President Eliot had acted with sagacity. "The college," the *Crimson* declared in a brief editorial, "has good cause to congratulate itself on the appointment of Professor Briggs as Dean. Probably none of the younger professors is so well known and liked. Mr. Briggs's position during the last few years as head alternately of several of the large English courses has brought him into contact with a larger number of men than it falls to the lot of

most instructors to know. All those men unite in admiring him for just those qualities of sympathy and fair-mindedness which are so necessary in an efficient dean. No other appointment would have been so acceptable to the students, whose wishes in a matter of this kind are not to be overlooked, and Mr. Briggs may look forward to the cordial co-operation of the whole college when he begins his duties next year." [1]

In all the exhilarating, often amusing concern over his appointment, it was but logical that the outside world should wonder what he was like and what his educational policy—if he had any—would be. So completely unknown was he that some of the newspapers of Boston misspelled his name grotesquely; and they wrote about him as though he were an interesting stranger just come to New England: "He has a smooth face, and is very youthful in appearance. He has a faculty of catching a fellow's name and remembering it all through a college course. . . . He leaves a most favorable impression on the college man, and his droll humor and curious criticisms of work in English always captivate the freshmen. The boys liked him as an instructor, and they still like him as their dean, though the

[1] Friday, April 10, 1891.

position is not one in which friends are made, as it is of a disciplinary order. He gets considerable amusement riding, and he often watches college contests on Jarvis or Holmes field while on horseback." [1]

Such bits of information, supported by the reports of students that he "didn't look much like a dean, but would probably make a good one," satisfied the less persistent. But the more persistent wanted to know what he was going to do, now that he was in. His predecessor, Dean Smith, was a conscientious scholar, a devoted servant of Harvard, and a champion of right conduct among students. Dean Briggs himself has declared that Dean Smith was "the salt of the earth." But he was somewhat wooden in his methods, and he unfortunately did not move students to approach him frankly. In fact, they preferred not to approach him at all; they went to his office only when sent for. In his day there was abundant truth in the words, "Not to know the dean is a certificate of good character." He maintained discipline by the vigorous use of the iron hand—if he maintained it at all. It was evident enough that Dean Briggs would undertake no such policy. But just what would his policy be?

[1] From an unlabeled clipping.

He soon gave an inkling and he gave it in characteristic fashion: "Hereafter," he said, "I hope the man will seek the office and not the office the man." And he turned whole-heartedly to this policy of friendliness. Those who had doubted the wisdom of his appointment—at least some of them—were now filled with a kind of pleasurable consternation at the prospect of having the undergraduates run away with the dean—and with the college. He added to their consternation by openly declaring that he did not mean to give his chief time to "disciplining men," even in friendly fashion. He had long before discovered that college men not in the criminal class—and most of them are not—are troubled with all sorts of personal matters which they wish to talk over with some one older than themselves. He meant to be that some one.

Of course, there would be cases of discipline. In so far as they required his attention, he meant to deal with them with the following ends in view: (1) To help the student disciplined, and not merely to humiliate him; (2) to make it easy for the faculty to do its work; and (3) to develop a sentiment among the students which would render discipline less and less necessary.

Few persons who have not worked with large

groups of men in the flaming days of their early youth can have any very perfect conception of the difficulties which a college dean must encounter in carrying out such a policy—or any policy, for that matter. Here are twelve or fifteen hundred undergraduates from homes as different as homes can be, and with standards of good taste and right conduct quite as diverse as their homes; with all sorts of aspirations from the most regular to the most revolutionary; with an imperious inclination to play, and a willingness to look upon work as something ideal toward which a man may move, but never too perceptibly; with few acquaintances in the college town, little sense of responsibility, and no very close attachments to the older members of their families a thousand miles away. These young men—or somewhat sophisticated boys—come pouring into college in the pleasant days of September, most of them eager for something, and many of them not caring what!

The college dean is expected to receive this unruly, vociferous mob, to encourage the best of them in their sublime endeavor—if he has any time for the best of them—to inspire the unawakened, to strengthen the faltering, to save the weakly vicious from drunkenness and cheap women, and to fill the

hearts of the criminally inclined with terror. At the same time, he must maintain the semblance of an ordered community, even at the expense of some of the individuals who compose it. For the fundamental purpose of a college requires a somewhat ordered organic life; and parents—strangely enough in some instances—want their sons to be in a better community when they are in college than when they are at home.

Dean Briggs, then, faced no holiday. But he brought to his task a right spirit. He shrank from the thought of a position of eminence among his colleagues, but he welcomed the opportunity to deal with all sorts of students. He had learned in the teaching of English—an effective training-school for deans—that he could be much at home among the diverse problems which incessantly come to any dean's office. And when he retired from all his duties at Harvard, he declared to a friend that he never wanted a better position than the deanship of the college.

If we add to this joy in his labor the personal qualities which he carried into every enterprise, we may have some just notion of the spiritual equipment with which he undertook this greatest task of his career. In so far as these personal qualities had a

bearing on his duties as a dean, they were well summed up by President Eliot when in 1900 he conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Laws: "The well-beloved Dean of Harvard College, patient, tender, discerning, candid, just, and cheering because convinced of the overwhelming predominance of good in the student world."

II

He turned with great enthusiasm to the carrying out of his threefold plan of discipline. To be sure, it was so much one plan that all the parts had to be carried along together; but his avowed intention of disciplining men for their own good, of reclaiming those worth reclaiming instead of perfunctorily dismissing all offenders, attracted the most immediate attention because it was so much in contrast with the customary procedure of the time. "Too often," he declared three or four years later, in setting forth this part of his policy as he had tried to carry it out, "dismissal seems to turn a helpless boy adrift upon the world. If the prodigal would go to his father, there might be hope; but frequently his first instinct is to go almost anywhere else, and his father will let him go, rather than reveal his dismissal to the neighbors. Dismissal, when all is said for it, is too drastic

Photo by Purdy

DEAN BRIGGS IN MIDDLE LIFE

for most purposes; and expulsion is almost too relentless for any. Gradually an administrative officer moves toward one or the other of two opposing theories of college discipline: the theory of purging the college of the shiftless and the vicious, and the theory of keeping everybody but the fool and the criminal, in the effort to make him as nearly as possible a man. The first theory is attractively simple; the second calls for the time and the strength of those who can ill spare them, and for the sacrifice, in teachers, of the higher learning to the spirit of the helper of men. No one accepts the second theory absolutely; for everyone sees that the salvation of some students is in leaving college for a place of inevitable toil, and that others whose cases are not hopeless cannot be kept with safety to their fellows: but in a college filled with youths of whom many are far from home for the first time, the claims of the second theory cannot be silenced. A third theory—that a university is for learning only and should not concern itself with the character of its students except in cases of public scandal—is practicable and perhaps necessary in professional schools, but has no place in a college. For college purposes, I believe more and more in few penalties and unremitting personal interest of teachers in their pupils' welfare. If this

fails utterly, the student should go where, as a matter of course, work begins early and ends late; and where the relation of industry to success is a palpable fact. . . . It is uphill work at best, and more or less in the dark; the weak are too weak, the strong are not strong enough, and the instructors may want tact and wisdom: but the spirit is right." [1]

If he was to be a college dean, why should he not master his profession as well as the teacher masters his? Should he not learn to discover easily just which ones of his hundreds of youths were worth the time of the dean and the teachers, and which ones should be sent without unnecessary delay to a place where the relation of industry to success is a more palpable fact than it is in an undergraduate college? But how is one to discover?

Once when he was considering the question, he observed with a fleeting glow of humor: "Any man who has looked at freshmen for years can judge much by their faces; but such a principle of selection is not unerring, and it might not commend itself to parents." Nor did he find any other easy way. Yet by looking the youths in the face, by meeting their parents—to a dean one of the most enlightening of experiences—and by steadily amassing an

[1] Report, 1895.

inexhaustible fund of shrewd knowledge concerning youth, and student traditions, and the mixed motives which prompt human action, he was able to distinguish the make-believe and the real with a sureness that was amazing. Instead of being the easy mark which some of his colleagues had feared he would be, he was as difficult to throw off the track as any man who ever sat in a dean's chair. And when the unrestraint of genuineness was reflected in a man's speech or conduct, no man ever saw it with a quickness more closely akin to intuition.

"My first encounter with him," confided a man long well known in the world of affairs and letters, "was at the very beginning of my freshman year, when I had the misfortune, on 'Bloody Monday' night, to lead a procession of victorious freshmen to Boston. On the way we appropriated some remarkably tempting red lanterns which were hanging on the barricade of a street under repair. Of course the police descended on us, hit some of us, including me, over the head with their night sticks, and removed us to the police station, whence we were duly bailed out by distracted parents. I was new at the ways of the world, and saw myself on the point of summary dismissal from Harvard before my career had really begun. The next evening, after I had duly

appeared in police court and paid my fine of fifteen dollars for petty larceny, I went timorously up to Dean Briggs's house. I had read his book [1] and thought he might be sympathetic. I told him the whole story, including a visual demonstration of the lump on my head produced by the policeman's billy —a lump still quite impressive—and I shall never forget the gently amused way in which he told me that he did not believe my crime was one which would involve my being separated from the university, and that the feeling of my head ought to be sufficient warning not to try conclusions with the police again. Having dismissed that matter, he invited me to come in and have a cup of chocolate. My affection for him dated from that minute; he certainly straightened out what might have been a rather inauspicious beginning to my college career."

Not always did he escape deception. In case of doubt, he invariably gave all benefit of the doubt to the student. That practice led some students and some colleagues inevitably to think that the Dean had been taken in; that he "would as soon believe a lie as the truth." But he was not concerned with what people thought of him; he was concerned with justice. Nothing so filled him with an almost inex-

[1] *School, College, and Character.*

pressible indignation as injustice to those who had no means of presenting their side of the case to their fellows or the public. More than once he declared, "I had rather be fooled a dozen times than be unjust once." Yet it remained true that he was not often fooled. When some pampered youth passed him in the Yard and smiled at the thought of his own supposed shrewdness, usually the Dean was able to smile at the thought that he knew infinitely more about the youth than the youth himself ever suspected.

In the adventurous, almost evangelistic enterprise of reclaiming the thoughtless, he added to his resources of kindliness, fatherly encouragement, and humor, the great tonic resource of adversity. "To the newly admitted freshman who means, after the long pull of preparation, to rest on his oars, the joy of idleness is immediate, the reward of industry remote. His head is turned by a new freedom, by the complacent discovery that he is a 'man.' Numbness or blindness, which has been called 'the freshman daze,' invades part of the class like a disease. In such cases, nothing but adversity will restore thought and sight; and it is well if adversity does not come too late." This adversity, employed as a sort of negative climax to his readiness to give every man a chance, his belief in the predominance of good

in youth, and his own hopeful humor, brought many a student from the class which most men regard as hopeless into a full academic responsibility and not infrequently into enviable academic distinction. He was so earnest, and he cut so directly through all nonessential flummery, that the less hardened criminals responded.

Yet occasionally, after he had given a young man full opportunity—or had even thrust opportunity upon him—and had encouraged him with friendship and good counsel, the man revealed no concern over his precarious state. Thereupon the Dean called him to the office and informed him that he was no longer in college. Perhaps some greater adversity than any which he had encountered in college would quicken his interest. The Dean hoped so. He would always be interested in the man's progress, and he hoped they might have the pleasure of meeting again some day.

Whether a man would rather be dismissed by Dean Briggs than kept in college by other deans has long been a live question among Harvard men; it seems difficult to settle, since no one with the requisite information has come forward with testimony. But it is true that he treated even the worst offender with a cheerfulness which sent him away a sworn

friend—perhaps a privately sworn friend—of the Dean.

Of all the sprightly figures that adorn the college scene,
The most supremely genial is our own beloved Dean.
He'll kick you out of college, and he'll never shed a tear,
But he does it so politely that it's music to the ear.
He meets you in the anteroom, he grasps you by the hand,
He offers you the easy chair, and begs you not to stand.
"Good morning, Mr. Sporticus! How is your Uncle Jim?
I used to know him well at school—you look so much like him!
And you're enjoying college? Yes? Indeed! I am so glad!
Let's see—six *E's*? Impossible! How very, very sad!"

He was no less shrewd, and no less cheerful, in dealing with the men who were mild offenders—the men who would dodge some more or less important college regulation. There was usually in his method a certain artistic fitness of manner which impressed itself upon one at once and for all time. "I had entered college," a Boston lawyer once amused some friends by explaining, "with extra credits. I decided to take an examination in first-year college Latin and see if I could not 'anticipate' this work. I passed, but only with a grade of *D*. Toward the end of my college course I discovered that if I had only one more *A* I could graduate

[1] From *Harvard Celebrities.*

magna cum laude. Finally in my efforts to hit upon a scheme for getting this extra *A*, I said to myself, 'Well see here; I made an *A* in my entrance examination in Greek. So why can't I have that *D* in Latin transferred to my list of entrance credits, where a *D* serves, and my *A* in Greek transferred to my list of college credits, and thereby get the required *A* for *magna cum laude*? Why not? That would be pretty smooth.'

"So I went to Dean Briggs with my plan. He stood while I stated the case in brief detail, his head inclined in familiar interest. Then he asked, smilingly, 'Is that original with you?'

"I assured him that it was.

"He burst into hearty laughter. 'Fifteen other men have been in here and proposed that they be allowed to do the same thing!' And then he laughed joyously again at the huge joke of it all.

"I didn't mean to, but I laughed with him. There was nothing else to do. Then I sneaked from the office without another word.

"I still think the scheme was a good one, but I couldn't face the Dean with it!"

He knew all of the ways of saying no, and the most casual of them were magical in their effectiveness. "I was once called to his office—to explain

why I had been cutting Philosophy. In an attempt at justification, I stated that I had made an *A* in my mid-year exam in the course; that I was sure I could pull a *B* in the final without going to class very much; that my legs were long and were badly cramped by sitting in the close seats of Sever 11; and that the ventilation was not all that could be desired. His face lighted up with interest in my powers of improvisation. 'Well,' he remarked, quite casually, 'I don't believe I'd cut quite so often.' And I didn't. As a matter of fact, I didn't cut again that year."

In his efforts to help the disciplined, he found the students, all in all, more honorable to deal with than their parents. No psychologist has yet given a very conclusive explanation of why there are earnest, high-minded men to whom youths welcome the chance to lie, and others to whom they are ready to speak the truth, even to their own detriment. Sometimes Dean Briggs openly reminded men that what they were about to say might result in their being dropped from college, but they still—in the vast majority of cases—followed the other half of his admonition and told him the truth about their misdeeds as to a father-confessor. The parents, usually not having any opportunity to meet him

face to face, as the students did, were not always so honorable. They wished to be worldly-wise; they thought it a mark of superiority to be "politic"; they wanted to let the Dean of Harvard College know that they were acquainted with their children long before he was; and they sometimes commented interestingly upon both themselves and their children by proposing to the Dean that they and he enter into a conspiracy of some sort against the sons who were in college—a conspiracy, of course, for the supposed good of the sons.

Once he wrote a letter to one of the best-known citizens of the United States—a man whose position as university president brought him much renown—about a young man, then in Harvard, for whom this distinguished citizen was acting as guardian. A part of the letter was unfavorable to the student, but the remainder of it was favorable. The guardian, wishing to be impressive, wrote to his ward and told him that he had received a letter from Dean Briggs as follows; and he enclosed only the unfavorable part. The student, who only a day or two before had been assured by Dean Briggs that his situation, while not in every way satisfactory, was not dangerous, carried to the office in University Hall the letter which his guardian had sent to him

as having come from Dean Briggs. The Dean did not wish to destroy the confidence of the student in his guardian; but he wished much less to be made out a liar by the guardian, and still less to be accused by the student of acting a lie at the very moment. So he turned to his files, produced the duplicate of his letter, and let the student see exactly how the discrepancy had come about.

Because of this lack of frankness on the part of so many parents, as well as because of his desire to spur laggards to renewed activity, he often called students to his office and showed them the letters he was about to send to their parents. Such a practice established—or confirmed—a frank relation between him and a given student under discipline; it saved him from being thought of as a person who "lies like a dean;" and in case the parents tried to garble his letter, it usually led the student, because of his own more or less desperate position, to set them right. So the atmosphere was clarified all round and the disciplined was not obliged to go his way feeling that truth and justice had utterly vanished from the earth.

Of course there were many parents to provide exceptions to this general observation. Often fathers were moved by the highest honesty and by a heart-

ening desire to make the Dean comfortable in his trying duties. On one occasion, for instance, after he had disciplined a student, the father sent him an invitation to come and spend a week-end on his yacht. For the Dean it was a difficult invitation to decline and a difficult one to accept. If he declined, he might be looked upon as unwilling to stand in the open by his action concerning the son. If he accepted, his presence might be used as a means of reopening the case and trying to have the son reinstated. But he decided to accept. And as matters turned out, the hours he spent with the father of this student were among the happy ones of his life. The father made no effort to have the son discussed, and when some one else—possibly the Dean—mentioned him, the father only remarked, "He got twisted up pretty badly, didn't he?" But such parents, Dean Briggs himself more than once admitted, were "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." In his conscientious, kindly, and self-effacing efforts to discipline so that the disciplined themselves might be helped, he could not always count on such strength of character or such good taste.

Administering discipline to contribute to the second important end which Dean Briggs set up, namely, making the work of the faculty easier, might

well seem somewhat outside his official province. The rightful opportunity of the teacher to do his work was more strictly a matter to be considered by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Certainly Dean Briggs would not have been regarded as neglectful had he put the matter wholly out of his mind. But this business of educating youth was an enterprise which constantly accentuated his inclination to explore, and he saw that the discipline carried on in his office ought to be made to help the teacher in the work of the classroom. He himself was still a teacher and he knew only too well how the teacher's best vitality is customarily required for something other than the teacher's chief function. At this evil he began hammering in his first report: "Nearly every member of the faculty is also a member of more than one hard-worked committee. The business must be done, and may be done best by instructors; but from its amount and complexity, especially at the beginning of the college year, it bids fair to annihilate that repose without which study, in any high sense, is impossible. It drains a teacher's strength in the first week, and forces him, when his energy should be freshest, to go to the classroom with a mind full of subjects other than his teaching. Instead of the enthusiast that he

should be, he seems too often a jaded scholar struggling, against nature, to transform himself into a man of business." [1]

He observed how in two ways the burdening of the teacher with vexing administrative detail hampered the work of the college: it robbed the professor of time that rightfully belonged to him and his classes; and it often required a good professor but a poor business man to do a business man's work. In a lively economic age we have come to think that a man in any calling must be a good man in his place if only he acts or looks or talks "like a business man." Dean Briggs knew—and frequently smiled over the fact—that many professors of great power and distinction did not handle miscellaneous administrative details efficaciously. "They mislay notices, forget or misstate rules, and innocently produce confusion which they as innocently attribute to the office clerks. All this, though natural and pardonable in men addicted to higher things, is none the less menacing to our records."

In order, then, to set the teacher as free as possible to do his legitimate work, he proposed, in the first place, that more and more disciplinary matters should be reported to an administrative board rather

[1] Report, 1891.

than to the faculty as a body. Such a board could bring any case to the faculty if it seemed wise to do so. It could work with the dean's office in disposing of most cases, and it could make disposition of these with a surer knowledge of the facts, and with a wiser efficiency, than was possible to the faculty sitting in unwieldy session. Two years after he became Dean of the College he made his point clear when he discussed the problem of the man who has been dropped from college but wishes to be readmitted: "No student loves Harvard College more adhesively than the man who has been turned out of it. After a reasonable period of exile, he organizes his relatives, his friends, and his recently accumulated good purposes, and encamps before the college gates, there to abide until his case is settled. From him and his, meantime, a patient officer of the college may learn much—the youth's ethical status (and incidentally the potent working of heredity within him), the peculiar dangers that beset him, the right thing to do with him; but if the college is to be first of all a seat of learning, it cannot sacrifice to a person hitherto so unprofitable the time of the whole faculty."[1] And at this time Dean Briggs had already gained so much of the confidence

[1] Report, 1893.

of the faculty that many members were quite content not to be troubled with discipline at all.

But the teacher was helped in another way: the sympathetic and the much simplified procedure of the dean's office brought about a livelier discipline than was possible when every case had to be submitted to the faculty. Unquestionably most of this benefit went to the students; "sending a freshman home may have an excellent moral effect on both him and others in December, but little or no effect in May." Yet it is easy enough to see how the teachers profited also. For flunkers in college, by their very laziness, require more time than the same number of students who are working conscientiously. So when the discipline was lively, the teachers were early relieved of this dead weight of the shiftless and the stupid, and their task was made more interesting by the improved attitude of those who remained.

So it came to pass that the Dean steadily gained the respect of his colleagues, not only for what he did directly for students, but for his vigorous and intelligent efforts to clear away the academic rubbish so that the really important educational business of bringing students and teachers into some spiritual association might be carried on with surer

success. His colleagues had seen him work magic in dealing with individuals under discipline, and now he was administering even the least inviting cases of discipline so that the members of the teaching force were positively helped in their own duties. Here, in truth, was a new kind of ally in the cause of education!

But he contributed still further to the welfare of the college through his methods of discipline. Never once did he lose sight of the third part of his aim; namely, the developing of a tone of student life that would render discipline less and less necessary. That there is an infinite difference between the mere motions of doing a thing and the doing of it in a right, enriching spirit, he believed with religious warmth. "There is a difference between a bare *A* and an *A* with the bloom on it." He would change college from a mere grist of courses with a certain amount of discipline and some incoherent student activities thrown in, to a center for "those countless civilizing and strengthening experiences which make a good college an incomparable school of manners and of character." But how could he have his "incomparable school of manners and of character" while the student body was shot through with certain kinds of

dishonesty, with carelessness, and in general with low ideals?

So he went to work on the whole body of students, as well as upon the individuals, and sought to weed out those evils which perpetuate instability of educational purpose. He attacked dishonesty in written work—a kind of dishonesty that flourished in American colleges generally at that time, and that still persists in many. "At Harvard College a liar, clearly known as such, is ostracized; a student who hands in as his own writing what he has copied from another man's writing may be, for social purposes, as good as ever. Few students approve of the theme-buyer and the theme-vender (who, by the way, feel a lofty contempt for each other); and few defend the student who tries, with copied work, to get scholarships, prizes, or honors: but if a companion is hard pressed by initiations or theater parties or athletics, if his standing with the faculty is precarious, if he is in danger of losing his degree—he may copy something now and then in sheer self-preservation. Looked at critically, he has missed an educational opportunity; but the loss is his only, and need not worry the faculty: if detected, he cannot expect credit for his composition; but to suspend him is monstrous. He himself affirms that

he did what everybody does; that he 'had to hand in something,' was not well, and was short of time; that his name on the theme is a mere label, quite noncommittal as to the question of authorship; perhaps that he copied from a book which the instructor 'could not help knowing,' and that therefore he could mean no deceit (he 'agreed with Thackeray's ideas and could not improve on his language'). He adds that he learned to 'crib' at school. Soon he is reinforced by a father who assures the dean that the young man is the very soul of honor and that this 'breach of the rules' is the thoughtlessness of a mere boy, which will never show itself again."[1] Such a state of affairs required remedial action; the man who would crib must feel that the sociological conditions were not favorable.

And there were other evils of the student body; perhaps not quite so grave, but just as insidious. Athletics, for instance, had warped college life out of all fair proportion for most students; and for those who participated in games—or sought to participate—had obscured the whole center of intellectual and moral life for which colleges ostensibly are maintained: "A youth of eighteen, just entering the college world and the world of society, with a

[1] Report, 1896.

comfortable consciousness of manhood and a perilous physical and mental elation, is still further elated and imperiled by finding himself a member of a 'team.' His classmates pay to make him so skillful that by and by they may pay to see him, and, like an Olympic victor, he is fed, in part, at the public expense. His coach, whom he artlessly supposes to be a person of great weight with the faculty, commands him to be on the field at a certain hour, and, regardless of studies, he obeys. Moreover, if he does not surrender himself to football body and soul, he is abused for treating so serious a pursuit as if it were play." [1] Here also was a just occasion for remedial attack.

But he did not stop with two or three of the more obvious evils. His standards were high. He bent his energies toward having men come back to college promptly after vacations, toward having them keep their classroom engagements even at some inconvenience or pain, and toward correcting numerous other petty vices that contribute so much to the ragged edges of morale. With such matters he was struggling incessantly, and not always with easy success. Well toward the end of his labor as Dean of the College he wrote in one of his reports (1900):

[1] Report, 1893.

"Though in most respects the tone of the undergraduates has improved within the last few years, there is no decrease in the tendency to offer excuses in place of duty promptly done. Our students are an exceptionally healthy set of men; but a good many of them are inclined to neglect recitations and lectures, on the score of this or that small ailment such as nobody who regarded college work as serious would consider for a moment. These students fail to see, first, that it is a man's business to keep himself fit for his business, and, next, that the work of the world is done, in large measure, by men and women whose throats and heads and stomachs do not feel exactly right, but who do their appointed tasks and in doing them forget their throats and heads and stomachs. It is melancholy to see able-bodied youths the victims of diseases which permit all pleasures and forbid all duties; it is almost equally melancholy to see how they spell the names of the diseases with which they are perfunctorily afflicted."

To elevate the tone of a body of twelve or fifteen hundred undergraduates called for great ingenuity and great faith. As in the case of many another of the Dean's enterprises, there were people of hardened wisdom who scoffed at the thought of doing anything; who saw here only another instance of the

impossibility of changing human nature. But such people invariably forgot that Dean Briggs was at his best when he was dealing with men, and that in the overwhelming majority of cases he could do with men what he would. So in his efforts to lift the tone of the student life, he openly and persistently called upon the men themselves to help him—the very men whom he would help. He was not sure that any kind of detached honor system would work, but he never doubted that much could be done if only he and the students worked in co-operation. He was likewise doubtful about the efficacy of any paternalistic scheme of watching out for everybody, but he believed that some good purpose would be served by an informal organization. He was profoundly confident that by means of a close acquaintance with a part of the students, he could reach a large number of others who faltered, and cheer them—or prod them—into some degree of intellectual and moral promptitude. In his annual report for 1897 he revealed the working of this plan, and very modestly intimated something of the success with which he was already meeting: "The healthy feeling of undergraduate responsibility for the good name of the college, and the natural desire of earnest young men to be of use, have found expression in

an organized effort of the older students to do something for the younger. Eleven seniors and juniors are the nucleus of a committee of sixty, each of whom has assumed some responsibility for one-sixtieth of the freshmen, the first-year special students, and the first-year scientific students. Each undertakes to see his men at the beginning of the year, to give them some notion of the best things in Harvard life and character, and to stand ready in time of need as an unpretentious counselor. In some things, no teacher, however kind, can be half so much to a green member of the university as an older student of acknowledged standing.

"Undergraduates are often justly charged with unwillingness to see that a college is 'an institution of learning.' The undergraduates engaged in this movement have seen that Harvard College is more than an institution of learning; and that, so far as it fails to give its alumni and its students earnest purposes and high ideals, so far it falls short of its own purpose and its own ideal. 'It has been one merit of Harvard College,' says Judge Holmes, 'that it has never quite sunk to believing that its only function was to carry a body of specialists through the first stage of their preparation. About these halls there has always been an aroma of high

feeling, not to be found or lost in science or Greek —not to be fixed, yet all-pervading.'"

Toward a richer aroma of high feeling, toward an "incomparable school of manners and of character" the Dean lifted his undergraduates. In transforming discipline he transformed the spirit of the student body.

III

With all of this attention to discipline, however, Dean Briggs never departed from his original intention of making the dean's office a place which men would seek out individually when they were perplexed and longed for counsel. The world which confronts a student when he goes to college is chiefly official. He seems no longer to be a human being; he is a member of a class, a member of a team, an occupant of such and such a room, an *A* student or an *E* student, a "major" or "concentrator" in Greek or chemistry, or "Account No. 4,378" at the office of the treasurer or bursar—anything except a youth who loves an adventurous life, who suffers profoundly, and who would share his enthusiasm and—if his distress is great enough —his suffering with some one who has not lost his enthusiasm or his capacity to suffer. Dean Briggs

himself was incurably young. He knew that the experience of youth is more genuine than that of most judicial-minded elders who bewail youth's quixotic unreality. He insisted that the total effect of college should not be the breaking of "that eager spirit which is the glory of youth and too often of youth alone."

He became, accordingly, a chief kindred spirit for all sorts of lonely and hungry souls. He saw, for instance—the most ironic joke in American education—that the conscientious young scholar, the youth whose enthusiasm is scholarship, is very lonely in an institution of learning. So he not only made himself a refuge for such, but constantly urged that others should do so: "These scholars lead quiet lives—else they were not scholars—and cannot aspire to the notoriety of a youth who, before the eyes of ten thousand men and women, breaks his collar-bone for his Alma Mater. Yet, though as compared with athletes (even with defeated athletes) they are nobody, though their recognition is mainly the quiet approval of their teachers and a sort of awe in some few of their companions, they have compensation. Neither the sickening lack of privacy that before a great game drives the football player out of town, nor the overpraise that so often puts

a sharp stop to the growth of the 'literary' undergraduate, is the meed of youthful learning. The scholar of twenty cannot and should not be a great public character—his fruition comes later; but he should never be suffered to doubt the watchful approbation of the college that he serves." [1]

Likewise he labored in behalf of the "special students," the men of irregular standing who because of a late start in life, or some other handicap, were unable to gain admission to any constituted college class. In addition to these men for whom the name "special students" was originally created, there were rejected candidates for admission to the freshman class who sought this irregular grouping as a kind of back-door entrance to the privileges of Harvard; and certain men who came from small colleges in remote places became members of this group until they could patch up a more stable classification. There was, then, little exaggeration in one professor's characterization of them as "the rag-tag-and-bob-tail of the academic world." But Dean Briggs saw among them many sturdy, eager men who would not be content with a short journey, and throughout his eleven years as Dean of the College, he not only fought their battles for them, but wel-

[1] Report, 1896.

comed them to his office and to his house. "Of necessity the special students are an incongruous collection of men—a 'job lot,' they have been called; yet, taken together, they do as honest work, if not as brilliant, as the members of any college class."

For every sort of man he was a cheerful, hopeful friend; but the under dog, the man to whom being down and out was a grave possibility, seemed to be the object of his most ardent, most affectionate concern. If all the records of his encouragement to struggling college men could be brought together, they would make such a volume as has never been written.

So acute were his powers of observation that students used to declare he could recognize a hungry man clear across the College Yard. Somehow all the men who were working their way through college seemed to be known to him, and he constantly kept an eye out for their comfort. If he suspected that a man was on the point of dropping out because of insufficient food or clothing, he would find an excuse for meeting him somewhere, and he would invariably close the conversation with, "Now promise me you won't go without first coming to see me." In some mysterious fashion he was always making it unnecessary for men to go at all.

A man who had the misfortune to be lame in both legs and could not, therefore, do the manual labor to which many students resorted, has told, from his own experience, of the Dean's success in knowing who was in need:

"Only once during the four years had the outlook seemed hopeless. That was in the spring of the senior year. The city in which I had been teaching night school ran temporarily out of funds and I could not collect my salary. I had purchased a supply of paper for a printing job which failed me, and a late spring kept snow on the ground so that car fares ate up my earnings as fast as I received them. One morning, as I went to classes, I spent my last cent on car fare. I wore two rubbers for the left foot, and the world looked gloomy indeed. To make matters worse, the mail man passed me a note from the Dean asking me to call at his office at noon, and I wondered what new troubles were about to descend.

"At the dreaded hour I knocked at his door, and told him my errand. He stepped into the hall and in a stammering way said: 'I hardly know how to begin. Some years ago a man in the Law School died, and for several years his sister used to send me five dollars to give to some student who could

University Hall as It Is To-day

In this building, designed by Bulfinch more than a hundred years ago, the greater part of Dean Briggs's life-work has been carried on

not go home for Christmas Day. Recently, one of the men to whom I gave the five dollars returned, and gave me back the five dollars doubled. Now I wonder if you would feel hurt if I should ask you to accept the ten dollars which he just gave me?' To my dying day I shall always wonder how Dean Briggs knew of my financial condition, for, as far as I can recall, this was the only time he spoke to me during my four years in college." [1]

He was always tramping about, seeing to it that somebody was well clothed or well fed, or provided with other necessary comforts. How he found time for his countless errands of this sort, no efficiency expert could calculate. But in the white days of winter, when he was not to be found in his office or at home, he could usually be found trudging along some street in Cambridge, often with a box of cut flowers hanging loosely under one arm, and the snowflakes piling themselves into the gaping collar of his brown great-coat.

A family of distinguished brothers who worked their way through Harvard had one especially bad winter when neither work nor heat was plentiful. They were occupying a room in an unrented house

[1] "Working His Way Through College," by David J. Malcolm, Harvard '13. The *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, vol. xxvii, no. 36 (June 11, 1925).

which the real-estate dealer was glad to have them live in, since he could in this way keep his fire insurance in force. The weather was so cold that the water had to be turned off, and the brothers carried water from a neighboring house. Their plight could not be called exactly cheerful, but in their financial condition, any kind of room was good enough. "So on we lived, gayly if not too comfortably. . . . During the bitter winter weather one of us fell ill with measles. Thereupon Dean Briggs called to see that the sick boy was well cared for. No one answered the ring until the sick boy crept downstairs to the door. The Dean was immensely impressed, but remarked rather apologetically that he was sorry a college rule strictly forbade students to live thus in a house alone. His chief concern, however, was whether we were really comfortable. Upon our assuring him that we were wholly all right, he seemed satisfied. He called occasionally, always first asking about our health and comfort, apparently not in the least concerned that a rigid rule of the college was being broken. He might well have insisted that we live up to the rule; but he knew that we were too busy to take advantage of our isolation by 'rough-housing' or otherwise getting into mischief.

"Of President Eliot I saw very little; his theories about education were somewhat nebulous and unreal, like theories about the stars. But about Dean Briggs there could be no doubt. He was human; he was intimate, personal, vastly gentle and kind. To me and to my brothers he meant Harvard, and Harvard meant nothing else than Dean Briggs."

On such errands, his unobtrusive manner sometimes led him into amusing experiences. "Well, come on in. What are you standing out there for?" a student who did not know him commanded. And once when he was carrying some flowers to a sick student—an undergraduate who had married at the beginning of his junior year—the student's mother-in-law greeted him at the door.

"I have brought a package for Mr. S——," he explained.

"Well," she requested, supposing him to be a delivery man, "take it right on upstairs, then."

After he had gone, she learned, to her horror, that she had been speaking to the one man for whom she probably had greater regard than for anyone else in the entire college world.

Men's bodily ills, however, claimed no more of his attention than did their mental weariness and despair. Men in the most acute stages of remorse,

men full of penitent regret for their real or imagined shortcomings, men whose eyes were red and tearful in the last stages of nervous breakdown, found in him a deep, mystical assurance. "I had just reached one of those planes in my existence," wrote a man of foreign parentage some time after he had worked his way through a trying career at Harvard, "when it seemed that everything must necessarily be wrong. The universe was no more than an irreconcilable error, and humanity was only a satirical accident. I was almost ready to resign myself to a kind of stupid madness; quite ready to board the first freighter leaving Boston Harbor that would take me farthest from my kind. I knew that something was wrong with me, but, try as I might, I could not discover what I needed. In searching for Lethe I was discovering nothing but Chaos. My days were spent in an apparently endless contemplation of a rapidly approaching horror, and my nights in a long, impatient effort to force myself into a few hours of sleep. I had had no relaxation for three years, and my body vehemently protested the negligence. I had tried to economize the insufficient funds with which I was paying my necessary bills, and I succeeded only in undernourishing myself. I wanted to get on, and by making a fatigued brain do the

work of a rested one, I only added to my unbearable load.

"Dean Briggs must have seen the perplexity in my face. One morning—an autumn morning when the scurrying leaves and the lead-colored murky sky seemed appropriate symbols of what was forming itself within me—I plodded along one of the gray walks in the Yard, perhaps toward my room, perhaps toward nowhere—just plodded. Suddenly I was yanked away from myself by the sound of my name. I turned, and beheld the Dean's slightly stooped figure eagerly shuffling its way toward me. He smiled, held out his hand, and bade me good morning—me who had just arrived at the important but rather unhappy conclusion that I was severed irretrievably from all things of any worth. He mentioned one of my papers, and diplomatically alluded to the pathetic prologue which my whole appearance must have recited aloud to so keen a perception as his—the perception that had read between the lines of my paper. Then the apotheosis: he was no longer the professor of English whose teaching has left its impress upon the whole country, no longer the gentleman in academic robes whose portrait hangs now in the Union, no longer an official of any kind, but a man stripped of all

externalities and appearing in a kind of visible spiritual essence whose chief goal was to give me every possible means of help; who gave, not ambiguous and questionable proverbs, but sound and precise directions, like those of Polonius to Laertes.

"I do not remember any of them. I only remember that I put them into practice and that I gradually grew out of morbidity into fresh air. Scarcely a week passed that he did not stop me long enough to give me—indirectly—the assurance that some one saw in me more than I myself could see, and that some one was actually going out of his way to be my friend. Then I experienced what Jean Christophe must have felt when he wandered through the streets of Paris mumbling over and over again, 'I have a friend.' I understood, too, what certain great mystics meant when they declared that the spirit of great creations never dies; for, so far as I was concerned, I dared to believe that I had seen, if not a precise reincarnation, then a very faithful likeness, of a man once called Christ."

It must not be supposed that a man whose lifelong "method" is exemplified in such instances could live among students and have all of them accept him unreservedly. Some of the more sophisticated said that his moral code was that of 1850—the most

devastating condemnation that anyone could offer! Others found his great simplicity an invitation for practical jokes, although those who came closest to him were extremely cautious in such attempts. Once, in the evening when he was just ready to go to some engagement, students in large numbers began to arrive at his house. After the throng had become suspiciously large and he had expressed his surprise, he learned that the men had received invitations from "Mr. and Mrs. Briggs" for the evening. Some other practical joker—possibly the same one—once sent out to students a great number of requests to appear at the college office. The men who received them were puzzled, some of the innocent were frightened at the thought, since they could recall no offense they had committed which would justify the request, and many began feverishly to build up a defense for sins which they had in fact committed, but which they had hoped would not come to the attention of the Dean. Their relief was explosive when they gathered numerously before the door of his office only to learn that he had no desire to see them. Yet those men whose restless souls made them most irreverent were as ready as any, in their dark days of remorse, to look to the Dean for a justice based upon understanding.

In arriving at that profound intimacy and clairvoyant sensitiveness which enabled him to help a man out of his own peculiar morass, he was aided greatly by a practice which he had established almost as soon as he had begun his teaching; namely, that of keeping one evening a week open so that students might come to his house and spend an hour or two with him and Mrs. Briggs. In every college there are, unfailingly, certain students who could not be induced for any reasonable reward to go to see a professor and his wife in their own house. Dean Briggs made that discovery early. But it did not prevent him from seeing, on the other hand, that there were men so weary of the artificial dignities and artificial classifications of a college community —or any other highly specialized community—that they were hungry just to sit down unafraid with a kindly man and his gentle, unpretentious wife and talk about the things their own families had talked about back home.

So every Tuesday evening they went to the rambling yellow house at 146 Brattle Street—later to the house provided by Radcliffe College for its president, and still later to the white house at the corner of Brattle and Ash—and were received into the heart of a home. Sometimes the men were a

little embarrassed at the sight of one another; they each wished, perhaps, that the others had not come —so pleasant would it be just to sit there alone with Mr. and Mrs. Briggs. But the Dean soon broke down any barriers by turning to a clearly objective life. He discoursed on the intelligence of Fritz, the great St. Bernard who walked agreeably about and poked his nose into the knees or folded arms of the visitors until they acknowledged his presence. Or he demonstrated how Joshua, the spotted cat—or possibly Robert Browning, Joshua's predecessor in favor—could jump through his arms or could distinguish certain words when spoken by the right member of the family. Or he talked of some of his neighbors in the Plymouth country—how they were still unspoiled by telephones and automobiles. Or he laughed over the freshman who had written that "Dante stood with one foot in the Middle Ages and with the other waved a greeting to the rising sun of modern literature," or over the guide in the Harvard Yard who had said in response to a question by one of the fifty tourists who swarmed admiringly about him, "Oh, the women students are all over at Radcliffe; Harvard itself is strictly non-sectarian!" or over something else that called for no strained sophistication on the part of those who listened.

And then he asked the maid to bring in some chocolate and cookies—on one historic occasion, cream puffs—and he demonstrated how they could be enjoyed without unnecessary restriction. In the course of a very few minutes these men ceased to be "correctly shaved, combed, and buttoned automatons" and became cheerful fellow-beings who talked without fear, who felt no desire to demonstrate their sophistication, who seemed a thousand miles away from an academic community. It is vastly important and real and comfortable to be sitting with a man who tells stories and enjoys them, and who is so unaffected that he "goes leaning his way about the entire room" while he talks. And how heartening to talk to a pleasant, motherly woman who knits or crochets in the glow of the great lamp on the table while she listens and understands! One may speak intimately about one's father and mother, and one's home town—how agreeably large it looms! One may express one's hopes for the future without having them all scoffed at by some adult who has suffered arrested growth.

The men glow with a surprising readiness of thought and speech. They are in no hurry to go. But finally, when they do go, they depart in groups —sometimes in one intent group—and they con-

tinue the conversation on the way. They discuss the Dean, too; "how he had carried off some overworked instructor to his house on the Cape; how he had done this for some poor scapegoat, and said that to some senior who was slipping."

Little surprise that men who did not see their way clearly, who believed the blackness of an indifferent universe was closing in upon them, should be impelled to go to the Dean. They felt no barriers, for the simple reason that there were none. To him, their troubles seemed perfectly clear, too. He knew exactly what one needed. The utterly sick and helpless and lost felt well and steadied again, and found their college world remade into a place of inviting wonder.

IV

Within a decade, then, see how this man became so large a part of the institution in which he worked. Daily he is up early. Early he swings along Brattle Street, his green book-bag over his shoulder, his hat pushed just the least bit back from his forehead, the light of the morning full in his face—"the most unworldly face," according to one of his neighbors who saw him starting off to his work every morning, "that one may ever hope to see." He is

down at the Yard early enough to have done no inconsiderable part of a day's work, and to have attended morning prayers in Appleton Chapel, when the students begin to come in at nine o'clock or nine-thirty. All forenoon they pour into the corridor—loafers, flunkers, discouraged self-supporting country boys, fathers, mothers, homesick freshmen who have hatched up some reason for seeing the Dean just to be near him for a few minutes—all these pour in and wait their turn to be admitted to his office; fellow-officers of the college wedge themselves through the waiting throng of students for a word about some difficult matter of administration; the telephone is insistent that some one at a distance be heard; he promises to attend without fail an important meeting of some board of school trustees of which he is a member; he accepts an invitation to speak at some school or college within a month; he listens with great interest to a graduate who has slipped in to report that in spite of his mediocre college record he is now not doing so badly. With all of the extras, the morning is too full; the conferences stretch on into the hour customarily set aside for lunch. Sometimes the Dean is able to steal away for what he calls a perpendicular lunch—in his later years, at Jimmie's on

Holyoke Street; sometimes the procession in front of his office door is so long that men are still waiting to see him when those with afternoon appointments begin to arrive, and he gets no lunch at all. On some days, too, there are class lectures to squeeze into his program; and there are always themes to grade, commencement parts to read and criticize, and reports to work on. And there are committee meetings, and faculty meetings, and meetings of the Department of English. Occasionally when he has gone through a day of this kind, and is ready to hurry away to his house for dinner, somebody brings him the disconcerting news that a freshman has disappeared from the university, or that a sophomore has been drowned in the river, or that some pampered hanger-on is locked up in jail and his parents are demanding why the college let him get there. Yet through the steady pressure of such a day he never lets anyone feel that a matter is being hurried; the hurrying is "between times." "The greatest evil in the whole business," he once remarked to a former student who was interested in college administration, "is doing things in a hurry. The student who comes to you with a problem which seems to him as grave as death is certain to feel, if you deal with him impatiently, that he is

unimportant and that justice is unimportant." So within the confines of the office, every man was at ease in the thought that his case was the most important in the world. And until it was satisfactorily worked out, it was.

With all of these hours in his office, there yet remained those others which he spent in visiting the sick, in looking after some colored family whose mother had once been a servant in the Briggses' house, in hearing the petitions of good Cambridge ladies who believed they knew of important matters which ought to have his attention, in tramping about looking for some stray student, and in general saving the world as much pain as possible. A neighbor on his way home from a midnight train which had arrived in Boston an hour or two late, found the Dean tramping about Harvard Square looking for a thoughtless senior who had not paid his college bills and whose family, then on the way to Cambridge to see him graduate, would be humiliated by seeing him go without his degree unless he paid the bill before nine o'clock the next morning!

Could one be much startled at signs of overstrain in the Dean after a decade of such vigilance? He was cheerful still, but weary. President Eliot one day came to him and said, "I have heard that you

went to sleep the other day standing up." It might have been true; he dropped off to sleep whenever he sat down in seclusion, and sometimes when he talked with a friend. He could no longer continue the killing pace; the breaking-point was too near. So it was decided in the spring of 1902 that he should succeed Professor Clement L. Smith as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences—the same Professor Smith whom he had succeeded as Dean of the College, and who was now about to retire from all active service in the university. The new position promised the quieter life which he needed, yet kept for the university some part of the man who had changed the entire character of the office of Dean of the College. He would not have the endless rush of daily conferences about grades and absences and readmission, yet he would still be there in University Hall as a part of official Harvard, and he could be called Dean Briggs.

The undergraduates heard of the proposed change with something of the amazement they would have experienced had Dean Briggs suddenly been translated to some other world. They were assured that he would still be connected with the university—even, to a certain extent, with the college—and that he was receiving a distinct promotion in rank. But

they were not concerned with his promotion—at least not just then. The matter of importance was that they were losing their Dean. Anybody ought to understand that!

But they made the quick recovery characteristic of youth. If he had to go, they would speed him on his way. And they would let him know—as though he had never known before—just how much they thought of him. Accordingly, one evening in May, after they had arranged with Mrs. Briggs and one of the Dean's colleagues to have him come to his office on some specious errand, they assembled east of Sever Hall, fifteen hundred of them, and marched to the steps of "University." They lighted up the Yard with red fire; they cheered until their Dean looked shrinkingly from the window of his office; one of their own number, a member of the senior class, made a brief, fitting speech; then they cheered on and on and called for Dean Briggs until he revealed himself a little more fully. He was deeply moved by this spontaneous, genuine assurance of affection; so deeply moved, in truth, that he found it difficult to speak. "I thank you for your kindness," he is reported to have said, "and I can only say that I am not a bit afraid of the students of Harvard College in Mr. Hurlbut's hands. They

will be looked after well. I hope when I give up my present work I shall see as much of the students as I did before. I think you can get along without me" (cries of No! No! No!), "but I know that I cannot get along without you."

There was tremendous and prolonged applause, and then the regretful breaking up of this great crowd of young men who perhaps did not see very completely just what Dean Briggs had contributed to their college, yet who knew that it was something which satisfied an essential need of their adventurous spirits. Just what that contribution was, Dean Hurlbut made clear in his first report as Dean Briggs's successor: "While he was dean, the university conferred the degree of Bachelor of Arts upon more than four thousand men; more than five thousand have known him as an administrative officer, and have been better men because they have known him—a just man, tender yet clear-sighted, who in protecting the college never once forgot the individual. No one of all this army has ever felt himself neglected or without a friend. But in enduring value his services go even beyond this, for he has given a definite form to the administrative policy of the college, and set an example for all who may succeed him. The minutes of the board show but a

few of the perplexing and difficult questions with which he, as the officer whose delicate duty it was to enforce the law, has had to deal—petitions for an exception to every rule the college has ever made, the spurring on of the lazy, the encouragement of plodders, the punishment of wrong-doers; only in the hearts of men are written the full records of his untiring patience, his boundless faith, and the sympathy that has made each man his brother." [1]

V

When Dean Briggs took up his duties as head of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in the autumn of 1902, not only the undergraduates, but the members of the faculty wondered whether he would be able to maintain individual relations with any considerable number of students. To be sure, his freedom from problems strictly undergraduate would give him, perhaps, the necessary time. But would not the trend of his new duties pull him inevitably away from all inclination to counsel with the numerous troubled young men who might wish to see him? Would he not slowly sink into the important but highly uninteresting business of manipulating courses and schedules and statistics?

[1] Report, 1902.

Many believed that he was destined to become an "administrator," and that consequently he could not possibly prolong the period of close association with students. But they failed to see how unalterably the Dean was a man whc could work only by means of the individual, and they overlooked one clear tendency in education which bore on the question. Colleges and universities were growing rapidly; yet nowhere was there an inclination toward breaking the institutions up into co-ordinate units such as the colleges of British universities. Everything had to be "pyramided." There were, then, more cases accumulating which might well be passed on to such a central officer as the Dean of the Faculty. And at the same time, because of the increased enrollment and the more highly complicated faculty procedure, more matters were placed in the hands of committees, especially the Committee on Instruction. Thus it came to pass, despite all the new duties which ere long he was to take up as chairman of the Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports and as president of Radcliffe College, that he was not only provided with a great number of cases not unlike the ones he had dealt with as Dean of the College, but was blessed with a little more time for dealing with them—thanks to the many matters placed in

the hands of committees—than he had dreamed possible. He was, then, in the twenty-three years confronting him as Dean of the Faculty, to continue in great measure the struggle for the individual which had been so large a part of his work as Dean of the College.

But he was obliged to plan his battle differently. In the early years of his deanship of the college, the attention which the undergraduate was likely to receive from colleges was impersonal, official; now he was in danger of receiving no attention whatever. Harvard, like most universities in America, had reached that uncomfortable size where the machinery was beginning to show signs of clogging its own operations. Dean Briggs saw an inevitable tendency toward such rough-shod, iron methods as would keep the machine going, and he struggled, if not against the tendency itself, then against accepting the situation complacently. He meant, at least, to save the new order from some of its grossness.

In his first report as Dean of the Faculty, he called attention to the difficulties which a freshman encountered in what would seem to be, in a college community, the perfectly simple matter of getting honest advice about his course of study: "For a freshman when first he faces the elective system the

danger of mistakes is grave. His home advisers seldom know the college; his college adviser seldom knows him. Moreover, his college adviser may well hesitate to discriminate among studies which the faculty declares to be of equal value; or he may believe it his duty to recruit his own specialty; or he may believe it his duty to keep clear of what anybody would construe as recruiting his own specialty: in the matter wherein a freshman first needs advice the adviser is neither qualified nor permitted to advise." And worse still, as the university grew, and all relations by the very nature of the case became more impersonal, these advisers were under constant temptation to make their counsel more and more perfunctory.

The faculty, moreover, had grown enormously, yet it had never relinquished much of its prerogative of going into detail in the numerous matters which came before it. It was unwieldy. In truth, there were conscientious men who believed that the large faculty as a body had outlived its usefulness, and that it should no longer be held together. Dean Briggs believed that it should be held together; but no less certainly did he believe that it would have to modify its procedure.

His chief work, then, as Dean of the Faculty may

rightly be said to have consisted of his struggle for a larger simplicity in the workings of the faculty itself, and of a continued, persistent effort to have the individual life of a student treated as something precious. To be sure, he was occupied with many other important matters. He was concerned—sometimes humorously concerned—with all sorts of questions of policy. He labored against the drift of students away from the dormitories in the Yard to the more handsomely equipped private dormitories of the Gold Coast, and referred to the bathrooms finally installed in the college dormitories as "a belated tribute to modern civilization." He very evidently took time out to write, in one of his reports, the pleasantly suggestive observation that the faculty had had "a singularly uneventful and peaceful year." He worked with unflagging interest in behalf of better instruction in the large lecture courses of the college. He busied himself with the new requirement (1910) of an oral examination in either French or German for all men about to be admitted to the junior class—in case they had not met it earlier. He tried to discover some revised entrance requirements which would maintain a high standard but not an eccentric standard. He concerned himself with the important plan proposed

Photo by Bachrach

At His Office in University Hall

by President Lowell, who had entered upon his duties as successor to President Eliot in 1909, that an undergraduate should concentrate in one field of study and take a variety of supplementary courses in others—a plan first carried out in the Division of History, Government, and Economics. He paused long enough to observe (1916) that the new required physical examination of freshmen had been carried through, and that while members of the faculty had opposed it as an infringement upon personal liberty, and as "in other ways objectionable," "not a single case of objection occurred among the freshmen themselves." He turned aside from his strictly academic duties, as did most college officials, to help bring the World War to an end; and he was profoundly concerned with some of the problems of reconstruction, especially those that touched educational life closely. And through all these years he carried a heavy burden of office routine. Yet it may still be said that his struggle for academic simplicity and for a rightly disciplined individual constituted his most significant work as Dean of the Faculty.

In his modest but persistent campaign for a greater simplicity, for a getting away from the faculty's practice of "clouding its debates on policy

with every conceivable small side issue," he expressed himself with such humorous sagacity that his annual reports were looked forward to with expectant delight. On one occasion a very important officer of the university ventured to suggest to him that "while the Amerian people like humor, I believe they prefer it separate." And such an urbane newspaper as the older New York *Sun* devoted much editorial space to this Dean who had a sense of humor. But his reports could also be eloquently direct:

"In every one of these questions, it [the faculty] should strive, I earnestly believe, for a large simplicity, and should intrust details to administrative committees responsible to itself for nothing but the reasonable exercise of full power. The radical fault in its schemes, whether for admission or for graduation or for anything else, is, as I have intimated, a detailed complication—the result of unwillingness to accept anything without minute information regarding every nook and corner of it. Such information can never be thorough, after all. No scheme that concerns the lives of varied human beings can fail to reveal, after a short trial, new nooks and new corners—not merely unexplored, but unimagined;

and thus the faculty finds itself hoisted by some of its own petards which, from their innocent appearance, have not been recognized as petards at all. It is therefore constantly revising its plans, but not so much with a view to simplicity as with a view to unattainable thoroughness. . . .

"In the art of touching nothing that it does not complicate, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is by no means alone. Those persons in charge of athletics have attempted a similar thoroughness in defining professionalism—with even sadder results. In the relation of one university to another, whether for athletic purposes or for academic, a crying evil is the attempt to establish many elaborate rules that shall take care of themselves, rather than a few simple rules that assume the service of judicious and honorable men to take care of them. Harvard University, always a leader in many things, may well show its leadership in a magnanimous simplicity of written law." [1]

A year later he pointed out how this larger simplicity would contribute to scholarship: "In my last report, I expressed the belief that the chief need of the faculty was a large simplicity. Toward such a simplicity it is slowly moving. It is reducing the

[1] Report, 1905.

membership of committees when reduction is practicable, and it seems inclined to give committees and chairmen more power. The importance of such a policy is the greater because the fresh enterprises in which the faculty is constantly engaged and the increasing personal attention to individual students (for example, to candidates for the degree of A.M.) tend to make heavier the administrative work of individual teachers. This work may be the best work a teacher does, may give him his strongest hold on the young men and a warm place in their memories; may even add to his efficiency in a limited amount of teaching, through his clearer vision of the minds and characters of the taught: yet it must reduce his teaching in quantity, and may, by exhausting him, reduce it in quality; and it is an inveterate foe to scholarship. For these reasons it would seem wise that the real scholars in the faculty should undertake only so much administrative work as they may need to keep them human." [1]

To what extent could this policy of simplification be carried through? Anyone familiar with the temper of a college faculty knows how difficult it is to attain even a small simplicity. Yet in 1911, nine years after the beginning of his work as Dean of the

[1] Report, 1906.

Faculty, he was able to report this encouraging progress: "By adopting a scheme firm in big things and flexible in little ones, it has shown its desire to rid itself of detailed formalism and to maintain the only policy by which a faculty of its size can live."

His concern for the individual was likewise modified by the character of his more inclusive office, although it became, if possible, even a more alert concern than it had been while he was Dean of the College. As usual, he was busy with students who brought to him every kind of personal distress. But he was also busy with young assistant professors who deserved promotion, with struggling young instructors and their earnest, struggling wives, and with young women in the university offices who had performed valuable service with unnoticed fidelity. The humblest member of the university force was sustained by his unassuming courage. The inclusion of a "Testimonial to Mr. Jones" in his report for 1908, and his own appreciative words concerning the retiring bell-ringer, might well provide a model for all men who concern themselves with education or with the means of a better working relation between employer and employee:[1]

[1] As a matter of fact, Dean Briggs had himself engineered the project of a "memorial" of some kind to Mr. Jones.

"If the faculty ever acted with perfect unanimity, it did so in the recognition of the work of Mr. Jones, the old ringer of the college bell. It is said that only once in his fifty years' service the bell had been rung late; that then it was but four minutes late; and that this unexampled tardiness was caused by the need of Mr. Jones's help for putting out a fire in the College Yard. He was a man to set clocks by, uniquely combining an aspect of good-natured ease with the promptest efficiency—never in a hurry and never found wanting. The faculty gave him a 'Franklin' armchair with a suitable inscription, and a parchment illuminated by Mr. F. Schuyler Mathews with these words:

'The Faculty desires to record at this meeting the completion of fifty years of honorable and faithful services to Harvard University by Mr. Austin Kingsley Jones. Mr. Jones entered the service of the University in 1858 as College Janitor, and for forty years had charge of the Chapel and other public buildings, and rang the bell on Harvard Hall. In 1898 he retired from his active duties except that of ringing the College bell. This duty he has performed for fifty years, giving an example of fidelity and punctuality to all members of the University.

The Faculty congratulates Mr. Jones on his long service to the University, and bespeaks for him the happiness and satisfaction which the sense of having worked well and won many friends can bring.' "

A Friend in the Dean's Office

In the long stretch of years in which he daily was alert in behalf of the individual, there came to him one opportunity quite unlike any he had ever had before. He was a professor of English, and no man ever worked with more zeal to bring each student's writing up to a high perfection. But the Board of Overseers in 1914 came forward with what seemed to be a sweeping proposal that the faculty prevent any man from graduating from the college who could not write "correct, coherent, and idiomatic English." Long had Dean Briggs hoped that every student might write his mother tongue honorably. Yet the clear possibility of excluding some vigorous, raw youth who might some day be one of the chief glories of the university brought him at once to the interesting position where—at least to the undiscerning—he seemed ready to sacrifice the "standards" which for a third of a century he had fought to maintain. He would have every student write well; that fact ought to be taken for granted. But to him the dangers of blanket legislation were so hideous that he courageously made his feeling a matter of official record—with becoming tact, but with unquestioned clarity:

"In May the president presented the following vote of the Board of Overseers:

'In view of the various and convincing proofs brought to the attention of the Board of Overseers that the students both in their entrance and college examination papers, especially in courses other than in English courses, fail to write correct, coherent and idiomatic English: *Resolved,* That the Faculty of Harvard College be requested to devise suitable measures to remedy this condition of affairs, and to report to this Board not later than January 1, 1915, a definite plan for bettering the written and spoken English of Harvard students.'

"The chairman of the Department of English moved that a committee of seven be appointed to investigate and to report upon this request of the Board of Overseers. The motion was carried.

"Every one of the foregoing votes will do good if interpreted with due regard for human weakness. In the attempt to make boys think clearly and write well, scarcely any pressure can be too strong; yet every experienced man knows that many youths who do not write correctly and idiomatically deserve admission to college, retention in college, and graduation from college. Every experienced man knows also that no one always writes correctly and idiomatically; that no one knows precisely what correct and idiomatic English is; that style, so far as it is not instinctive, is the result of long and delicate training in the sensitive recognition of fitness, and that it is a fine art which many intellectual men will

never achieve. Style, however, is not demanded by any of the foregoing votes.

"We all live in glass houses. A fastidious critic might take exception to the phrase 'in the examination papers of all subjects' as not quite correct when applied to what students write in the examination room; and a fastidious critic might take exception to much in what I am writing here. Until the written and spoken English of college officials throughout the country is better than it is now, the English used by many worthy boys in an examination will never be 'correct, coherent, and idiomatic,' in any strict sense of these words. We all live in glass houses: yet we must accept the duty—and take the risk—of throwing stones.

"The faculty is becomingly cautious in proclaiming that an examination book disfigured by 'elementary errors in spelling,' etc., will not be 'considered entirely satisfactory.' Spelling is an accomplishment, the lack of which is still—or still should be—a disgrace; but many good and great men have lacked it; and since the spelling-book has ceased to be in daily and universal use at school, the proportion of intellectual persons who cannot spell appears to have increased. A college teacher, if he himself can spell, should lose no opportunity to improve the

spelling of his pupils; but it is not the business of the college to teach spelling. If a student cannot spell when he comes to college, he will never spell unless he learns for himself; nor should his intellectual progress be stopped by the college authorities on that account. He must learn gradually while exercising his mind in his mature studies. Fortunately the undergraduate who writes 'aigues' for 'eggs' and the candidate for admission who refers to Portia as 'a welthey aeris' are generally no more vulnerable in spelling than in other things; but there remain bad spellers whose positive claim on a college education should not be ignored. One of the world's greatest scholars in his own department habitually in college spelled 'speech' with an *a*, and wrote themes about 'Thackery' and 'Scot.' One of the best loved professors in America spelled 'usually' and similar words with one *l*, and 'niche', 'nitch.' Another college professor, who more than justified his academic training, wrote 'purgerer' for 'perjurer' in his junior year. We must face even the fact that bad spellers may be good writers. In a certain college course in English Composition the man who was recognized as the ablest writer of the class was quite capable of writing 'Satin' for 'Satan' and of spelling other words to match. In the grammar-

school his writing might have been marked 'zero'; in college it was (justly) marked *'A'*. I suspect that many persons who write better than the most critical of us spell worse, and rely on the printer to spell for them. Humiliating as it should be to spell badly, a college cannot follow that staunch old teacher whose remedy for bad spelling was a mark of 'zero,' even in geometry ('Badly spelled geometry,' he said, 'is bad geometry').

"All this means that it would be easy so to interpret the combined votes of the faculty and the overseers as to shut out men of power who have not achieved certain desirable kinds of accuracy. Mr. Joseph Conrad uses 'like' as a conjunction, splits infinitives, substitutes for 'later' the inelegant 'later on,' and does not surprise you if he calls a telegraphic message a 'wire.' Yet the student who had written as Mr. Conrad has written would be one of the glories of the university. Interpreted reasonably, the votes will help a department whose needs are great and chronic, towards the ideal (less humble than it might seem) of making every student's English, even in examination books, intermittently, if not steadily, presentable. Interpreted reasonably, they deserve the co-operation of every teacher and every student; for nothing in the education of the

American youth is more painfully defective than his training in the use of the English language and in that clearness of thought which the right use of any language implies."[1]

"Interpreted reasonably"—that was the all-important part. Colleges should know men well enough to discriminate between the poor speller whose spelling is a symptom, and the poor speller who is so earnestly engrossed in something very important that spelling has not received his persistent attention.

To the end of his long official career, no dream of a high, standardized accuracy, no glowing educational will-o'-the-wisp, ever lured him away from the business of looking out for individuals. Only a few months before his withdrawal from all duties in the university, he wrote to a young college president who had turned to him for guidance in a disheartening case of discipline: "I am tempted to throw at you once again William Everett's remark to Dean Smith that it is the business of a dean to break rules, and that any clerk can keep them. I doubt whether two cases were ever exactly alike. It is a common fiction, which saves much trouble, to assume that they are, reducing them to something more or less

[1] Report, 1914.

arithmetical and then treating them as if they were invariably and eternally true." He had learned, without any touch of soft sentimentalism, not only that an individual, after all, is the most precious thing in the world, but that it is only by treating men with a high respect for their individual sensitiveness that they can be moved to the enthusiastic activity, the ennobled self-regard, and the willing self-discipline without which all educational effort is futile bother.

CHAPTER V

An Idealist in Athletics

I

IF we would have a fair understanding of what Dean Briggs attempted to do for American athletics, we must first remind ourselves of certain sweeping developments in athletics during the opening decade or two of the twentieth century.

It is not easy to review the situation in clear outline. The lumbering mob mind is always in the way; people care little whether anyone has a clear view of this question or not. Fringes of truth do not concern them. Lazily they have lumped themselves —and everybody else—into those who are for and those who are against. They know so well where they stand that they can "argue" about athletics without so much as joining issue. The less hopeful among them condemn all sport because they do not bother to disengage the evil accompaniments from the sport itself; the more hopeful assume that since exercise is good for the body, therefore a two-million-dollar stadium is a glorious thing, even if it

robs all except a few students of any systematic exercise whatever.

Anyone who declines to be bound by such loose categories soon discovers that "the problem of athletics" is not a single problem, but several. Who, for instance, unless he has developed an anti-youth complex prematurely, can deny the value and the joy of sport as sport? What contests in life bring a more immediate self-respect and a more profound satisfaction than games cleanly played? And why should anyone minimize the pleasure of the spectators? Few spectacles are brighter, few afford humankind a better opportunity to reassure itself of its own good will, than thousands of men and women gathered cheerfully together in the flaming days of autumn to watch young men play eagerly and honorably.

If this were a complete statement of the case, there never could have been any problem of athletics. But neither the playing of the games themselves nor the attitude of the spectators can be represented with such unqualified hope. Men seem to have reasoned that if the pleasant excitement of games is desirable, then the more of it the better. So everybody in college and university towns was invited to shriek. Sometimes people shrieked only because everybody

else was shrieking, but all joined in the organized effort until a kind of football hysteria spread throughout the United States and displaced the spontaneous thrill of the sportsman watching his favorite sport. Unless a man who has lived chiefly in an American educational center has spent an autumn in some other country where the organized hysteria is unknown, he can little imagine how American character has been affected by this perpetual shrieking of the educated classes.

But the excitement has grown into something more than organized shrieking. Before every game, men must get the right "dope"—in order to prove their loyalty to their team by placing a right-sized bet! Newspapers must carry headlines designed to make the discussions of the "dope" feverish. The students two or three days before important games must begin to cut classes and lounge in hotel lobbies to talk things over. They must begin to hunt—usually with success—for some potent beverage that will relieve the oppressive tension. They must—not infrequently—indulge in the most unrestrained sexual debauches, of which the college authorities seem little to dream and of which they very evidently have no knowledge. They must spend the night before the game in a sleepless carouse which wholly

unfits them to enjoy the game they have been developing "spirit" for, and which provides the coach with one more good reason for hustling his players off to some secluded retreat where they may have a night of quiet. Then, of course, after the game this over-pitched jollification must continue—"parties," wild rides, and dances that often make a cabaret performance seem restrained: there is sorrow for some one to drown, and victory for some one to celebrate. And this entire jamboree, it may not be forgotten, is associated in the public mind with the supposed business of getting an education.

Naturally, too, men thus overwrought are in no state of mind to be courteous to visiting players or visiting spectators. It is easy to make bright remarks about "the enemy"; it is just as easy to misinterpret every similarly bright remark that the enemy—in a like state of mind—chooses in his turn to make. After an important Middle Western game a dozen years ago, the rival spectators as they swarmed over the field toward the gates suddenly found themselves engaged in a free-for-all fight. They never did learn who started it or why it should have been started. But there was enough latent bad feeling to carry it on with such success that not only students, but lawyers and ministers and editors and

corporation presidents carried the scars of battle for many days. Mounted police have been obliged to ride into a public square or the lobby of a hotel to disperse respectable citizens engaged in a fight with canes and less gentle weapons over an impending or departed athletic contest. One need not go back many years in order to come to a full appreciation of the caustic remark of a very great man who observed that athletics had been added to theology as a source of bad feeling among men.

And there was still a more baffling problem. Colleges result in college graduates. One of the most dramatic facts in the history of American education is the rapidity with which these graduates have become numerous. But their numbers are not alone significant; their greatest increase came at the very time when it was especially fashionable in America to organize everything with high perfection. So the graduates became conscious of one another, not merely because of a common experience in college, but because of the bonds of their own powerful alumni association. Of course, college graduates have always wanted their teams to win—and always should. But here, as an alumni association, they need not merely hope for victory; they can demand it. When the chief and perhaps the only intelligence

which comes to them from the college has to do with sports—and this intelligence they cannot escape if they read the newspapers—they are more and more concerned with having it as agreeable as possible. Remote questions pertaining to the ethics of sport or to the scholarly qualifications of those who participate do not deeply concern them. What they want is a telegram—or a cablegram or a wireless—announcing that the team has won.

Now there will always be some men connected with a college or university who believe that it is primarily a place of learning. They rejoice in athletic victories. But they live in a college community year after year, they see athletic fortunes rise and fall, and—what is more important—they know that athletic fortunes for any one institution will continue to rise and fall despite every effort to keep them constantly rising. They cannot, therefore, wholly share the nervous views of the vociferous alumni. But their philosophic poise, so little expressed in alumni associations, only nettles the alumni into a still more acute consciousness of themselves and their position. They begin to mutter about "somebody back there who has become old-fashioned," or to demand disagreeably why some-

body doesn't take hold of the old college and make it what it used to be.

These alumni, moreover, when the college has enlisted them in financial campaigns, have been assured by the president of the institution that the college is their college. And many of them have come to believe what has been so graciously dinned into their ears. At any rate, the athletic teams should be theirs. And their greatest ingenuity has gone into producing teams that would make possible "the glad news." Their activity has sometimes been wholly legitimate, wholly honorable, wholly in keeping with the high integrity to which most colleges are dedicated. More frequently, it has been anything else. They have raised "slush funds" with which to induce high-school athletes to come to one college after they had fully decided to go to another; or with which to bribe a disgruntled coach when he threatens to resign inopportunely and go to a rival institution; or with which to promote the general athletic welfare as a small "committee" may deem advisable when emergencies arise. They have had high-minded coaches dismissed because a well-coached team that played a clean and interesting game happened not to be in top form for the contest which the alumni hoped most to win. They have pounced upon many a pres-

ident, many a dean, many a chairman of the committee on athletics, and sought to remove him—sometimes with immediate success—if he has courageously disciplined an athlete, or disqualified players in mid-season in an effort to stamp out professionalism, or treated a neighboring rival college with cordial fairness. Often a governing board is afraid to support a president thus attacked, and a president is afraid to risk his own position by supporting a dean or chairman.

This power of the alumni has become so great that even the most firmly established college official prefers not to meet it in open encounter. "He tried to 'buck' the alumni" is the epitaph which marks the end of many an administrative career. To be sure, there are some notable exceptions. When, for example, two Harvard oarsmen were removed from the crews just before the races with Yale in 1908 for having conspired in carrying off an important reserved book from one of the libraries, and no less an alumnus than Theodore Roosevelt, then President of the United States, telegraphed to President Eliot and undertook to point out that there ought to be some punishment that would not be so unpleasant to those who wished to see a good race, President

Eliot replied with such eloquent clarity that Mr. Roosevelt must certainly have felt that if he should only confine himself to governing the United States of America, President Eliot would try to look after the ideals of Harvard University.[1] President Eliot came through gloriously. But the fates were with him; Harvard won the races in spite of the eleventh-hour substitutions. No one can believe that his way would have been quite so pleasant if Harvard had lost. Somebody would have started an outcry against the old-fashioned doctrines of a man of

[1] The two telegrams are printed below:

To President C. W. Eliot, Cambridge:

Is it not possible and would it not be more fitting and just to substitute another punishment for [ ] and [ ] if, as is stated, they merely took away a book which they were permitted to use in the library? It seems to us, and, we feel sure, to the great body of graduates, that it is unfair and unnecessary to make others suffer for an offense of this kind for which some other punishment might surely be found.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.
ROBERT BACON.

To President Roosevelt, White House, Washington:

Each man did a dishonorable thing. One violated in his private interest and in a crooked way a rule made in the common interest, while the other gave a false name and did not take subsequent opportunity to give his own. The least possible punishment was putting them on probation, but that drops them from the crews. A keen and sure sense of honor being the finest result of college life, I think the college and graduates should condemn effectively dishonorable conduct. The college should also teach that one must never do scurvy things in the supposed interest or for the pleasure of others.

CHARLES W. ELIOT.

seventy-four who yet remained a university president. And the ease with which alumni can get together and create sentiment against a man who cannot so easily defend himself makes such courage as President Eliot's extremely hazardous and very conspicuous.

Colleges, then, have come logically to the most illogical of positions: they are afraid of their own product. The university president who prayed that he might have the good fortune to be made warden of a penitentiary, since there the alumni never want to come back to look after things, expressed more than a jocular attitude. College administrators want the alumni to feel at home—they are afraid to have them not feel at home—yet they are jumpy about alumni activity. They have often opposed majority representation of the alumni on the board of trustees—a puzzling comment on a college's ability to develop men of leadership; they are fearful lest the alumni concern themselves with developing a strong faculty—though not fearful that the faculty become strong; and many of them live in terror lest the alumni launch some enterprise in athletics that will embarrass the college and bring intercollegiate sports into discredit.

II

Now when Dean Briggs in 1907 added to all of his other accumulations that of the chairmanship of the committee on athletic sports, he faced not only one institution's full share of a national problem, but a number of problems more or less peculiar to Harvard. He had students, alumni, and the public clamoring for winning teams—the preceding years had been Yale years—and the Corporation, the president, and professors demanding one kind of restriction or another. The Corporation wanted smaller crowds; President Eliot wanted to abolish football altogether; the faculty wanted the number of athletic contests greatly reduced. In addition, there were parents who petitioned that their sons be kept out of football, although they had not sufficient strength of will to make the prohibition themselves, and there were many good people who made sharp remarks about the eclipse of learning at Harvard. This state of affairs, according to Dean Briggs in his first report, constituted "the scrimmage from which the Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports, in constant danger of losing the ball, is expected to emerge for some kind of touchdown."

This "scrimmage," which many Harvard men frankly declared an impossible mess, Dean Briggs accepted as something new and interesting to participate in. He saw how largely the difficult muddle was an expression of American life, and he was moved by the thought that if he could solve the problem as it presented itself at Harvard, he might contribute modestly to a sounder, more generous national character.

First of all, he struggled to get far enough above the problem to regard it disinterestedly; for a time he seems to have done little more. Then as the important outlines of the situation became distinct, he gave his chief energy to a threefold attack: (1) by attempting to create better feeling between Harvard and her athletic rivals, especially Yale, since there could be little improvement unless institutions worked together; (2) by trying specifically to change the character of athletic games themselves; and (3) by seeking to educate the alumni in the amateur spirit so that they would feel the importance not merely of winning, but of winning on the terms of gentlemen.

Could anybody create good feeling between Harvard and Yale? It seemed improbable. "The Dean is all right," some of the alumni said, "and we admire

his idealism. That's what Harvard stands for. But we don't believe he'll ever make us rub noses with the Elis." They could not, however, throw at him the taunts frequently rained upon the reformer in sports. He did not wish to see sports reduced to a place of insignificance, and since he had never attended Yale, he did not wish to make any Harvard man love Yale more than Harvard! In truth, he himself was one of the highest examples of a Harvard man who loved fun at Yale's expense. He never ceased to remind Yale men of the frightful anti-climax in "For God, for Country, and for Yale," and he relished the opportunity to make subtle suggestions to Harvard men that they were, without doubt, superior to the sons of Eli. In opening the meeting of the Alumni Association on the afternoon of Commencement Day, 1913—he had been made president of the association in the preceding autumn—he began with these words: "This has been no common year, but a year of great works undertaken in hope and gratitude. Of our material gains it is for the president of the university, and not for me, to speak; but I may speak of the increased intellectual respect that we have begotten in our neighbor and our dearest foe. After the football game in November, a Yale professor remarked that

the Harvard eleven of 1912 had displayed more intelligence than he supposed was contained in all Harvard University. President Lowell could not tell this story—it would seem like boasting."

But his irresistible inclination to be humorous at the expense of Yale never led him to forget the problem he had to solve—although his humor often enough helped him to solve it. He remembered too well the days of the games at Springfield when football had degenerated into a kind of underhanded prize fight. Although in those days it was openly declared, in justification of roughness, that you couldn't kill an Eli (or a Johnny), it yet remained fashionable to try. He had seen the Harvard-Yale games suspended in 1895, and he knew that the bad feeling engendered by this "suspension of hostilities" was almost as much to be deplored as that perpetuated by the hostilities themselves.

Once, at Yale, after he had become a welcome visitor there, Dean Briggs told of a Harvard-Princeton game that exemplified "the way it was done" in the early 'nineties: "More than twenty years ago, one of Captain Cumnock's elevens was worn out by a Princeton team which contained a well-known pugilist (so Harvard said) at one end, a theologian somewhere else, and behind the line a

gentleman known as 'Snake Ames.' There was an outcry against Princeton, Harvard not having learned to take her medicine. The theologian was said not to be in the university at all; Mr. Ames was said to have received money somewhere for playing a game; the pugilist's status was the subject of dark innuendo. Whether, if Mr. Ames had stayed behind his line and not persisted in getting behind ours, he would have passed unchallenged, I do not know. As it was, I remember that a college poet referred to the Tiger team as Princeton's 'sturdy employees.' When I was sadly leaving the field after the game, I met two Princeton men who were willing that the whole world should learn their opinion of Captain Cumnock's eleven. 'And such a team!' said one. 'Professionals! Scrubs! Muckers!' Whether one team was straight, or neither, or both, I do not know; I tell this choice little tale to illustrate a certain want of catholicity in the point of view." [1]

This want of catholicity in the Big Three was pleasantly, half-seriously smiled upon by the students and graduates of each of the institutions as though it were only a necessary shrewdness in deal-

[1] "Harvard as Seen by a Harvard Man." Reprinted in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, vol. xv, p. 210 (December 18, 1912).

ing with a dangerously shrewd adversary. If we are to trust scraps of evidence, it was nurtured even in family life, as in the instance of the little daughter of a Harvard athlete who declared: "I'll never marry a Yale man; I love my country!" In any event, the institutions were permeated with the bad feeling. A Harvard man of the earlier days made himself clear when he said, in discussing the schedule of contests for the next year: "The way to negotiate is to get them in a hole where they'll have to give everything you ask for." A Yale man a little more subtly expressed the Yale point of view when he declared, after a certain Yale professor had been made chairman of the committee on intercollegiate sports: "He's a fine man, but he won't last long. He is so straight he almost leans over backward; and the best Yale men won't stand for that."

Dean Briggs believed that the old feeling might be broken down, if only the representatives of the rival institutions could come together frequently in open, personal discussion of the matters through which bad feeling was engendered. For institutions devoted to the humane arts, any other course seemed to him to be little short of disgraceful. "Strategy in a game may be legitimate and admirable; strategy in the negotiations of friendly rivals is inexcusable;

and constant suspicion is as intolerable as it is unjust. 'Do as you would be done by' is still a better motto than 'Do or you will be done.' "

To the older generation it must have seemed almost an act of treason to have Dean Briggs, with an associate, go down to New Haven and sit in council with Mr. Walter Camp on such a question as changing the date of the Harvard Commencement. But Dean Briggs wished Yale, as well as Harvard, to have a baseball game for the home-coming alumni the day before Commencement, and he did not wish to keep Yale graduates waiting longer than necessary for the boat races after Commencement. The matter might be worked out if everyone was generous.

Mr. Camp was looked upon by Harvard men generally as a man who "took everything in sight" in intercollegiate transactions. But he and Dean Briggs worked together with the utmost cordiality and respect, the new program went into satisfactory effect (1911-12), and it has never been changed even in detail. Incidentally Dean Briggs found Mr. Camp a most interesting person, and Mr. Camp became a devoted believer in Dean Briggs—and not infrequently reminded him of his devotion. From time to time, certain restless Harvard men called

upon Heaven to witness that the Dean was about to be taken in by the crafty Elis, but Heaven was never able to bear witness to any such transaction. Dean Briggs's candor, his earnestness, and his unshakable good humor put everybody in a generous state of mind. It should be added, too, in order that the spirit of the proceedings may be recorded with complete fairness, that there was a certain penetration in the Dean's thinking that warned as well as encouraged. A man who was associated with him in athletics for many years said in trying to summarize his characteristics: "You never *wanted* to slip anything over on him, and you'd have been afraid to try if you had."

His thoughtfulness for rival institutions extended to all sorts of specific courtesies. He encouraged the Harvard undergraduates to play the cordial host to Yale students when an important game was to be played in Cambridge. He looked with steadfast delight upon the growing popularity of the joint musical programs which Harvard and Yale rendered the night before the annual football game. Barrett Wendell, who sympathized with the policy of friendliness, suggested that he did not like the word "Opponents" on the Harvard scoreboards at Soldiers Field; that "Visitors" would be much more

appropriate. And Dean Briggs had "Opponents" duly changed to "Visitors"—a change that was much commented upon by strangers and by newspaper men, and that has been adopted in other places. He thought it appropriate that the banner of Yale should be displayed along with the banner of Harvard on University Hall when Yale was to play in Cambridge. But nowhere in Cambridge could he find any "Yale blue" material from which to make this new banner! In Boston he searched long; and finally, at the shop of a tent-maker near the waterfront, he found some. When Yale next visited Cambridge, a Yale banner floated alongside the banner of crimson.

All these efforts in behalf of good feeling were successful quite beyond reasonable expectation. His constant insistence that "the whole bunch [Harvard, Yale and Princeton] be treated as one bunch, not three," was so genuine, so courageous, and so gracious that his contention, when he presented it in person, seemed only some well-known truth long forgotten—which it was. Inevitably in the relations of such lumbering organizations as modern universities, "sore spots" developed, and a press zealous in the cause of something to talk about lost no opportunity to irritate these. Forthwith the

Dean would call together the Harvard men concerned, set matters straight for them, and then, his little traveling bag in hand, hurry away to New Haven or Princeton, in order that the misunderstanding there might not be allowed to flourish in benevolent isolation.

Before he retired from his post in 1924, the change had been so great that he himself was able to say, "I don't know of a place in this country where a Harvard man is more hospitably received than at Yale." On another occasion, when some one questioned him about eligibility rules, he remarked: "I would just as soon leave a question of Harvard eligibility to Corwin or Mendell at Yale as to any Harvard man I know. If I had any fear at all it would be that Harvard would be favored in the decision." Truly a long step from the Springfield days!

But he was not content even with this unbelievable progress. "I look for the time," he wrote in his annual report in 1922, "when Harvard, Yale, and Princeton shall say to one another, 'I need know nothing more about the legitimacy of your players than is implied in your willingness to play them.' " This millennial day has not yet arrived. With all of the Dean's effort, it is still possible for undergrad-

uates at Yale and Harvard to make caustic remarks about one another—in the abstract. Harvard undergrads still carve in the plank desks of Sever Hall, "To hell with Yale." But the carving is less severely primal; there is decorative detail which shows that they no longer look upon hell as the place of unrelieved torment which they once wished it to be. Officially and in student sentiment the ideal state of sharp but courteous rivalry is nearer than it was twenty years ago.

III

Dean Briggs's effort to "reform" athletic games themselves was looked upon by many people as beneath the dignity of a high university official, and as quite futile. Either, they said, intercollegiate sports will be abolished—and a few institutions actually abolished them for a time—or they will go on very much as they have been going. Once again all of the favorite high-sounding untruths about the impossibility of changing human nature were quoted with a pleasurable sense of debasement. But the scoffers failed to take into account a fact that should have been familiar to them by that time: Dean Briggs was intimate with the spirit of youth; among young men he was at home and at his best.

Photo by Keystone View Co., Inc.

At the Harvard-Yale Baseball Game, June 18, 1924

And he knew that youth delights in an ideal, that it is always ready to begin a new era.

His first step was to take the undergraduates into his confidence. He told them that the committee was to have an open campaign in favor of sports as a part of a man's education. This policy he reiterated in his report at the end of his first year (1907–08) as chairman: "It [the committee] uses no strategy, has no secrets, and believes that athletic sports, like every other part of a student's life, should be administered not for themselves only, but for the highest welfare of the university." In the same report he was able to comment also on the response of the students: "The undergraduate members, whom the cynical or the skeptical are disposed to regard as persons that wish to circumvent the faculty in the interest of athletics, win and hold the respect and the warm regard of the faculty members." In truth, the undergraduates who sat in council on athletics served such a high purpose that there grew from this group a larger one which became the Student Council of the College. So Dean Briggs almost immediately had a strong student sentiment in favor of the cleaner sport for which he was working. He was, as everyone knew, an enthusiastic believer in athletics, but he did not wish to

have them "paralyze the honor of contestants and spectators."

Baseball was his favorite sport, and baseball received his first attention. "Here is a fascinating game with every legitimate opportunity for a quick body and a quick mind. Not a single act to which an intelligent observer can object belongs to baseball. Baseball, properly played, baseball brilliantly played, may be not merely a great game, but a school of health, self-control, and honor. Unhappily it is like the man (in the small boy's version) who 'went down to Jericho and fell among thieves, and the thieves sprang up and choked him.' " [1]

He assailed the ugliness of tripping a runner—a trick that is now "booed" by even the remotest bleachers at a professional game; he denounced the catcher's practice of "rattling" a batsman, and the crowd's concerted effort to "break up" an opposing pitcher when the home team very evidently is unable to do so; he tried to reduce the childish "yapping" of the players in the field; and he waged war on the smart spectator who delights in calling disrespectfully to an opposing player whose position in the field places him near the bleachers. To-day his proposals seem very much like matters of ordinary

[1] Report, 1910-11.

decency, but less than twenty years ago they were accepted in many places with sheer mirth. The editor of one college newspaper thought the pleasure of seeing a game would be gone if spectators were "denied the right to get the goat" of visiting players, and proposed that the "dear Dean's" protests be passed on to *Life* as one of the best jokes of the year. College baseball coaches, in those days recruited chiefly from retired players in professional leagues, wanted to know who "this damned Harvard professor" was who was trying to reduce baseball to the level of tiddle-de-winks.

But the Dean did not stop with these proposals. He insisted that there was too much coaching from the bench, in both baseball and football. The spectacle of a football coach pacing back and forth along the sidelines with his fingers twisted into all sorts of combinations in his efforts to signal his team what to do appeared to Dean Briggs to be not merely bad sportsmanship, but spiritual humiliation for the players. And a baseball batsman at the plate, looking helplessly toward the "dugout" for instructions, appealed to him, as it must appeal to many thoughtful persons, as a crushing commentary on our methods of educating men for initiative and leadership. He publicly condemned the unfairness of having a

baseball diamond which looked level, but which had been "doctored" just enough to enable the home players to know where to place their bunts. He pleaded that spectators refrain from their practice of rejoicing when an opposing football player was laid out. And he contended that a fine play by a man on either team ought to be cheered by everybody. Here, in truth, was a revolutionist!

For four or five years his fight was a hard one. Many of his friends believe that he would have failed utterly—or succeeded only in a very slight degree—had it not been for his singular power of disarming criticism by a generous, kindly approach, back of which there was no guile. In any event, those who at first called him a dreamer and "another idealist," began to admit that there was something in his plea for cleaner sport, just as there was something in his plea for friendliness between Harvard and Yale—but of course he had gone to extremes. Later they began to think that perhaps his views were not so extreme as they had seemed. And the undergraduates at Harvard stood behind him with a unanimity that went far to prove to their rivals that the Dean's idealism could be put into sport without sacrificing sport—or victory.

Then in 1913 he was made chairman of the Na-

tional Intercollegiate Athletic Association, and at the annual meeting in the Christmas vacation of that year he had an opportunity to speak before an audience which would carry some part of his idealism to all sections of the country. He made excellent use of his opportunity. "We are," he said in closing his address, "only delegates, it is true, not plenipotentiaries; but unless our combined force can in some degree leaven American sport, we have no excuse for meeting. I discuss but one game [baseball] and make but one suggestion; yet the principle of that suggestion applies to all games and to every contest. There was some terribly bad sportsmanship in the Presidential campaign last year. There is terribly bad sportsmanship in many—if not most—elections, whether of officers at a school or of rulers for a nation. Every little we can do to make clean our national game helps our citizens to make clean the greater game of our national life; for clean sport makes honest men."

By taking advantage of such opportunities—which he never sought but usually accepted—he secured for his ideals a more favorable reception throughout the country. His position in the most venerable of the American universities made it easy for other idealists who were less fortunately situ-

ated to use him in support of their contentions. Other men, to be sure, and other elements, entered into the movement for cleaner sport, but everywhere Dean Briggs came to be looked upon as the great and unyielding pioneer.

No one need be deluded; college sports are not wholly free from the vices and the lapses of courtesy against which Dean Briggs has so persistently battled. But no one who knew conditions twenty years ago can deny the improvement that has taken place. Ask the old graduates who have not seen many games since they left college, but who now see games occasionally. Or sit in the Stadium and listen to the comment of some of the unacademic but thoughtful persons who see opposing players helping one another up after a destructive scrimmage. Dean Briggs himself, always disinclined to speak of any good cause in which he has participated, could not refrain from rejoicing over the progress which was evident year after year. In commenting on the Harvard-Yale football game of 1921, he said: "To those who remember the contests at Springfield, the change was scarcely believable. To witness such a game was to strengthen one's faith in young men; to play in it was an honor and no insignificant part of an education."

IV

In his efforts to change the influence of the alumni on athletics, Dean Briggs sought to reduce the evils of over-organization and to drive out professionalism.

The evils of over-organization may not at first seem chiefly attributable to the alumni; but they are. Anyone who has been interested in athletics for twenty or twenty-five years, especially if he has been familiar with the Middle West, where organized sport developed later than in the East, has seen the steady growth of this influence of the alumni in favor of more trappings of every sort. He can remember when the players provided their own uniforms, sometimes paid their own hotel and railroad expenses, and managed to get along with few bills—often too few—to physicians, nurses, or masseurs. Most men had a perfectly good reason for paying out no more than was necessary. Sometimes the equipment gave the team the uneven appearance of an American army at Valley Forge; and alumni living in the college town, unwilling to be humiliated by a less-prosperous-looking team than their neighbors sent forth, "chipped in" for better equipment—and often for medical attention. Slowly institutions

accepted more important services of the alumni in managing sports. These business men—for most alumni in recent years may be so classed—thought things ought to be put on a business basis. Fewer boys got to see games over the back fence; and everybody paid more at the gate. The twenty-five-cent football game in a modest inclosure was superseded by a fifty-cent game, a dollar game, a two-dollar game, a three-dollar game, and a five-dollar game, in a Roman amphitheater.

If a neighboring institution built a stadium, then a larger one must be built at home. Increased gate receipts bring more money with which to hire a better coach, who will turn out a team that is a better drawing card so that it will be possible to build a still larger stadium and increase the gate receipts some more —! Caught up in the whirl of this mania, one university so short of funds that it required young instructors to do two or three times as much work as they should have done—and this work, in the first place, should have been done by more experienced men — nevertheless had such "up - and - coming" alumni that they built a football stadium which cost enough to have added fifty instructors to the teaching staff for all time.

Despite such instances, it must be borne in mind

that the motives of most of these alumni are genuine and admirable. Back of every other feeling is the wish to have their college well represented; any man with loyalty in his heart wishes that. He likes, too, to know that his team can "invade" other parts of the country and do creditably. "Inconceivable though it be to some men," Dean Briggs has said himself, "there are staid, middle-aged and even distinguished graduates of Harvard College in the West to whom the sight of a crimson jersey in Illinois or California is not unlike the sight of their country's flag in a distant land; and, though anti-athletic people may regard them as fools, such feeling as theirs has a value that baffles words." Such men, whose colleges did not impress upon them sufficiently the difference between an essential and a valuable incidental, have concentrated their loyalty on "doing athletics up brown." The gate receipts are always adequate—or can be made adequate—for all emergencies; so why not have everything that anybody else has? And they have sometimes further estopped college faculties from effective criticism by devoting generous surpluses to the erection of needed college buildings.

With the abundant receipts, expenses mounted. "The cost of organized athletics is almost scandal-

ous," Dean Briggs declared as early as 1909-10. "Captains, managers, and coaches incline to throw aside equipment that is highly serviceable and almost new, and to buy at great expense something wholly new and a shade better; they tend to encourage an exaggerated fastidiousness in hotel accommodations, in food, and in clothing; they too often require for themselves and their men such luxuries of the table and of transportation as none but the rich can afford. The days when the players bought their own uniforms and equipment, and paid their own traveling expenses and doctors' bills, are gone past returning; shoes and sweaters for players, dinners for coaches and committees, taxicabs for busy men who steal time to help us without remuneration—these things have become necessary; but shoes and sweaters to wear once or not at all, shoes and sweaters as keepsakes, souvenir photographs, taxicabs as the sole means of getting about, costly dinners with wines and cigars—all to be paid for out of gate money—these things belong with that theory of training which furnishes free automobile rides and theater trips as a relief to the overtaxed nervous system of the university squads. It is things like these that give a handle to the enemy of athletic sports, and pamper or even pauperize strong men."

Dean Briggs saw clearly that which most men saw not at all—namely, that extravagance and over-organization would divorce athletics from the essential spirit of a college, and that over-organization would eventually prove harmful to the very games which it was designed to help. Without much assurance of success, he struggled with the problem year after year. When the World War came, and athletic contests were either abandoned or greatly simplified, he was filled with hope. In 1918 he wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* that after the war we should never have the lopsided athletic machinery of pre-war times. Like millions of others, he saw a war-time mirage which with beautiful unreality promised the approach of some new day. Of course, his effort to stem the sweeping tide of unhealthy bigness may yet prove fruitful; but in this instance he seems to have been farther ahead of his time than in any other.

For the machinery of college athletics has continued to multiply irresistibly. It costs more to distribute the tickets for one Harvard-Yale football game than many a modest college of unquestioned scholarship pays for its entire secretarial force for a year. In some institutions it costs as much to put one undergraduate on the football field for one season of two months as many a college student pays

out for his entire four-year course. The gate receipts for a Harvard game in the Yale Bowl amount roughly to one-fifth of a million dollars; and for a Stanford game at the University of California, between a quarter and a third of a million. In other words, the receipts from one such game would pay the entire annual budget of such a college as Wabash, Kenyon, Centre, Knox. And the gate receipts at six principal university games on one Saturday afternoon amount to more than the total endowment of any one college or university in the country except the upper 121 in the Bureau of Education's list of 780.[1] At this season of the year, at least, people forget education and think athletics. Occasionally there are minor and unpopular protests against this usurpation of chief place by something which, however enjoyable, anybody in his lucid intervals knows is not of chief importance. But such voices sound remote in the clamor of the multitude. Dean Briggs must wait patiently.

In his efforts against professionalism, he was much more successful. Early he discerned that the most serious forms of professionalism, like the chief evils of over-organization, develop among highly self-conscious alumni. Students, of course, might

[1] Bulletin No. 20, 1924. The statistics are for 1922.

play summer baseball for money—and many conscientious college officials can see no good reason why they should not—but students could be dealt with directly and individually. In almost any instance, too, students would respond to an appeal to honor; or, if not to honor, then to the college statutes. "Appeal to chivalry," Dean Briggs contended, "but strengthen the appeal to chivalry by enforcing decency." But there were no opportunities thus to deal with the alumni, and the insidious kind of professionalism which alumni encourage cannot be reached easily in any other way.

Alumni who belong to one college fraternity decide that something must be done to help the team. Unlike the men of unquestioned motives who would build a stadium for the glory of Alma Mater, these men shrink not from a shady transaction. They find a stalwart athlete who is ready to go to college, and they tell him that if only he will go to their college—the greatest on earth—and join their fraternity when asked, his financial troubles will be over. He goes to college, he pays no fraternity bills, and from the treasurer of the fraternity he receives a thousand dollars a year—from a fund created by some brothers who wished to help a good man through college! Or alumni "lend" money to promising athletes, and

hold the notes only to prove in emergency that the transaction was made in good faith; they never expect to collect one cent. Or the treasurer of the athletic association is induced by friendly alumni to give some mildly disgruntled athlete the exclusive privilege of selling souvenir programs on the days of big games. He hires some loyal non-athlete to do the work, and in one season receives as much as two, three, or four thousand dollars in clear profit. Alumni engaged in business in college towns habitually hold remunerative places for athletes when earnest and needy non-athletic students must go begging. Quite generally these jobs may be farmed out—at least on occasion—so that the athlete who receives most of the money often does little of the work. Individual alumni, moreover, who care not to take the risk of paying money through the hands of anyone else, will undertake to put good athletes through college—provided, of course, the athlete remains good and plays the game. An alumnus of a distinguished university told a small group of friends who discussed the misfortune of some paid athletes in a neighboring college, that he had known eight athletes in his own university whose entire expenses had been paid by alumni. And not one of these cases ever came to the college authorities! They

had no reason to believe that these athletes were not the personification of the amateur spirit. Yet they were just ordinary hirelings.

Against this insidious evil Dean Briggs fought valiantly and sensibly. He begged the students and the alumni of Harvard to observe that professional sport is not merely unsatisfactory in itself, but that it twists the university into moral crookedness and in some degree debases the character of the American people. He entered into agreements with other colleges that would make the way of the professional difficult. Not only that; he dealt firmly with cases which came to him at his own institution, and, despite his great kindliness of spirit, he let others feel that they ought to be just as ready to deal with their own unpleasant cases. The insidious character of the evil kept him always alert and humble. When the subsidized athletes at Princeton were disqualified in 1922, and Harvard, Princeton, and Yale decided to require every athlete to give to the college a full statement of all moneys received from every source, he frankly observed in his report that suspicions about Harvard athletes had not been wholly allayed; he could only say that there had been no known occasion for dropping any man from athletic good standing. Everyone must remain alert.

Many things he would do to enforce decency. But the final defense which he proposed was a strong amateur spirit. The rules can never cover the case; the mucker can always find a way of evading the rules. The graduates' feeling must be right. "X may be secretly hired to attend a college for athletic purposes, and is therefore an undiscovered professional. Y may be another athlete helped in college by some generous helper of youth who likes Y's type, just as Z, a young scholar, is helped by another generous helper who likes Z's type. Y, like Z, is one of several hundred who are financially backed by kindly graduates. The causes of Y's patron's interest in Y are too complex for analysis even by that patron himself; but among them is Y's skill in athletics. Y comes to college for college life and college training. He cannot help regarding the discipline of athletics as a part of that training and the practice of athletics as a part of that life. Is Y a professional?

"There is no outward defense against a case like Y's; and on the whole it is well that there is none. The line between amateur and professional is delicate; in Y's case everything depends on the soundness of Y's fiber and the fineness of his perception.

Fortunately for athletics, the man whose loyalty to the athletic success of his college is measured by money may find his skill offset by the moral force of some young athlete without half his natural equipment for the game." [1]

In fostering the amateur spirit, Dean Briggs has made more progress than he himself knows. True, we may expect outbreaks of the old crookedness. But they are at least recognized now as crookedness. The unregenerate alumni who would still buy a team if they could, admit that the public and the colleges generally "would not stand for it." Among Harvard alumni—and it seems to be quite as true among the graduates of many other colleges—the men who were formerly called upon to come to the rescue of worthy athletes report that the calls have steadily decreased to a close approach to zero. Hardened, athletically sinful alumni of Harvard and of other institutions admit that they have reason to look upon athletics in a new way because of the great earnestness and unapproachable honesty of this inoffensive, persistent man. The Dean may never see the ideal state of which he has so long dreamed, but he sees to-day a better alumni attitude toward professionalism than he saw twenty years ago. And the men

[1] Report, 1914.

who have had their hearts in athletics know that in great degree he is the cause of the change.

V

Through all the hard labor, the criticism, the scoffing, that attended his efforts to make sport friendly, clean, and nonprofessional, he never lost his interest in sport itself. He was always at the games if he could get there; and he usually could. One forenoon a student called "Come!" to some one who rapped on his door. Much to his amazement, Dean Briggs stepped cheerfully into the room and inquired: "Can you go to the game with me this afternoon? If you can, come to the office at three-thirty. I must hurry back. We have a Ph.D. examination, and I stole away for a minute to ask you." As long as he was chairman of the committee, the athlete who won a contest or an event received from him one of those precious post-card messages with the smiling initials at the bottom—messages which athletes carefully put away in their college scrap-books. Nor did the struggle, or his necessary critical attitude, rob him of his humor. Never did he allow a situation to become flat gray. When he discussed for the Corporation the extravagance of athletics and of such luxurious accompaniments as

advertising by airplane over the Stadium, he could not resist the temptation to make a sly remark about the expensive overhead! To the end he remained not simply a believer in athletics, but a cheerful, enthusiastic believer who "would see them not merely maintained, but maintained at such a high level as shall keep them above legitimate question."

CHAPTER VI

Among College Women

I

WHEN President William Allan Neilson of Smith College once declared jocosely that Dean Briggs as president of Radcliffe College had contributed chiefly to the institution by making it respectable, he not only startled the five hundred Radcliffe women at the dinner where he spoke, but gave a summary of President Briggs's administration that is seriously truthful.

To-day, when Radcliffe is not only a respectable institution, but a distinguished one, it is difficult to remember how brief the period of its respectability has been. Its entire life does not reach back quite to the time when President Briggs began his career as a college teacher. It was only in the early weeks of 1879 that Mr. Arthur Gilman, who had become interested in the higher education of women in Cambridge, had made progress sufficient to justify a formal organization. He had enlisted a few of the influential women of the vicinity in his project,

and President Eliot had authorized him to ask Harvard professors individually if they should care to give instruction to groups of young women—"young ladies," Mr. Gilman very persistently called them—in case the young women desiring instruction should come forward. An overwhelming majority of the professors addressed were willing to offer such instruction, and for a very modest fee. Among those who responded favorably, it should be noted in passing, was a young tutor in Greek who then signed his name "Le Baron R. Briggs."

The committee which fostered this innovation organized itself into the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women, with Mrs. Louis Agassiz as president, and made provision for the reception of young women in September, 1879. The first classes were to be held at the house of Mrs. J. F. Carret, 6 Appian Way; and it is a matter of record that a person of no less distinction than Mrs. Agassiz herself made and hung the muslin curtains for the two or three rooms which were to constitute the new seat of learning. When the society opened its doors, more than two dozen young women enrolled.

The name of the society was an awkward one; and since the entire scheme which it fostered was dependent upon the generosity of Harvard pro-

fessors who were willing to repeat some of their courses for the young women, the society became known to most people as the "Harvard Annex"—a name which many Harvard students pronounced with mild disdain. But despite the unhappy name, the young women year after year became more numerous until, in 1885, it was regarded as feasible to purchase permanent quarters. Fay House, at the corner of Garden and Mason Streets, could be bought for $20,000. This necessary small sum was secured only after persistent effort.

Modest quarters, therefore, were guaranteed. But there was still a great humiliation for the young women to endure. Although they were probably receiving the most thorough collegiate instruction offered to their sex anywhere in America at that time, they suffered in general esteem because they received no degree at the end of their course. The society was not authorized to grant degrees.

In the next half-dozen years there were constant expressions of the need of this degree-conferring power, and finally, in 1894, after much hot private and public discussion, the society secured a state charter as Radcliffe College, a name chosen in honor of Ann Radcliffe, afterward Lady Mowlson, who in the middle of the seventeenth century gave to

Harvard College the first scholarship the institution received from a woman. Since this new college for women was to depend for its instruction upon Harvard professors, why should it not bear the name of the first woman to interest herself in Harvard when Harvard was the only institution of learning in the New World?

This permanent organization of the society into a college with full powers did not, however, make the way smooth immediately. Many thought Harvard should have taken the new college fully into its own Corporation, since the tendency everywhere in the country at that time was toward coeducation. At least as many others, especially Harvard graduates, believed the affiliation had already become too close; they feared the next step would be the making of coeducation general in the university.[1] In the meantime, Radcliffe acquired property, improved its equipment by building a new gymnasium and a new dormitory, and steadily increased its enrollment. It did not, however, gain greatly in prestige. Any arrangement whereby Radcliffe could maintain a college without maintaining a faculty of its own

[1] Barrett Wendell said repeatedly in his later life that he believed his most important service to education in America had been his relentless combating of coeducation at Harvard. See also the *Harvard Monthly* for October, 1899.

seemed to many educators of seasoned wisdom as the extreme of precariousness. Nor was the college accepted cordially in its own city; Harvard students and many residents of Cambridge looked upon it as the resort of "old-maid school-teachers" whose restricted social qualifications would prevent them from feeling at home in Wellesley or Smith or Vassar. By 1902, moreover, Mrs. Agassiz, who had worked from the beginning with great devotion and great tact, had reached the age of eighty, and felt that she could no longer carry on the duties of the presidency.

II

Just at this critical time when Radcliffe seemed to many people to have no status, it was proposed that Dean Briggs, of Harvard, be made part-time president of Radcliffe. Such an arrangement would give the new college an appearance of stability, it would suggest to the outside world that the institution had the official approval of Harvard, and since Dean Briggs was a much-beloved man among the Harvard undergraduates, it would bring Radcliffe into a new respect among the thousands of men going forth into the world from Harvard. Mrs. Agassiz saw in such an arrangement the position of respect

and security which she had so long cherished for her brilliant educational foundling.

When Dean Briggs was approached, he expressed a willingness to add this one more accumulation to his already heavy burden—a burden, as one of his associates put it, "heavy enough to kill three men, without starting off as a missionary in the education of women." Of course, he was to have only nominal duties—he was to sign diplomas and maintain a friendly relation with Harvard—and he was to receive a nominal salary.

Dean Briggs was then, as always, one of those modest, unpretentious men who cause a flutter whenever it is announced that they are about to undertake anything. He had caused a flutter, it will be remembered, when he became Dean of Harvard College. It might well be supposed that after his distinguished activity in that office the world would have been ready to try him anywhere. But now he was to be in a college for women—as the president—"the only man"! Men and women who had thought of him as a man among college men now began to wonder what he would be like as a man among college women. What did he believe about women's education? He had developed a "policy" at Harvard;

but could he have two? Was he to have a policy at Radcliffe?

Some of the people who so zealously asked these questions were enough concerned with the matter to suggest that Dean Briggs, like many a candidate for office, had had no policy until after he was elected! Quite aside from the joy that the Dean's friends must find in the suggestion that he ever filled the rôle of office-seeker, it should be said that he had already gone on record. In 1900, when Smith College was celebrating its quarter-centenary, Dean Briggs was one of a number of educational officials who spoke briefly—some of them—in an educational conference. He began his ten-minute address in characteristic fashion:

"Dr. Thomas Fuller, in his *Church History of Britain,* devotes a few lines to what he calls the 'Conveniency of She-Colleges.' 'Nunneries also,' he observes, 'were good she-schools, wherein the girls and maids of the neighborhood were taught to read and work; and sometimes a little Latin was taught them therein. Yea, give me leave to say, if such feminine foundations had still continued, provided no vow were obtruded upon them . . . haply the weaker sex (beside the avoiding modern inconveniences) might be heightened to a higher perfection

than hitherto hath been attained. That sharpness of their wits, and suddenness of their conceits, which their enemies must allow unto them, might by education be improved into a judicious solidity; and that adorned with arts which now they want, not because they cannot learn, but are not taught them. I say, if such feminine foundations were extant nowadays, haply some virgins of highest birth would be glad of such places; and, I am sure, their fathers and elder brothers would not be sorry for the same.'

"As early as the seventeenth century, then, people were thinking about she-schools with no vow obtruded upon them; in other words, about Smith College; and from the seventeenth century I take my text, 'Conveniency of She-Colleges.'

"There was once a man of the woods to whom it was revealed that he need do no work, but might beg and preach; and one day when some pleasure-seeking fishermen had landed their boat and he had got from them what money he could, he opened the following dialogue:

" 'Had a pretty good time, have ye?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Been fishin', have ye?'

" 'Yes.'

"'Had a pretty good time, have ye?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, let's set daown and think about death for five minutes.'

"To such a session I invite you now. Is there a grave side to all this festivity? Do girls' colleges justify themselves, after all? What is a girls' college for? What is, or should be, the difference between a girls' college and a boys'? Is there an *in*convenience of she-colleges?"

Then in three paragraphs—and the entire address is not five pages long—he states clearly his own conception of a college for women.

"'To women,' said a great man, 'we owe the charm and the beauty of life'—and some women were offended at his saying it. 'I believe it has been proved conclusively,' said the same man, 'that in college, women can do whatever men can; we do not know at what sacrifice.' Together, these two observations (both just) suggest the conventional objections to girls' colleges.

"In the best sense—in the highest and noblest sense—we owe to women the charm and the beauty of life. For purity of thought and heart, for patient courage, for recklessly unselfish devotion, for the

love that rests and strengthens and inspires, we look to women. These are the best things in women; these are the best things in life: in them men cannot compete with women; and women lose them if they compete with men.

"Here is the key to the whole question of women's colleges. These colleges exist not for the competition of women with men, but for the ennobling of women as women. They do not, or they should not, exist primarily for the higher learning; no more should men's colleges. All colleges, whether for men or for women or for both, are first and foremost schools of manners and of character; of enlightenment through study, through contact with the best that has been known and thought in the world, through association with the chosen youth from every part of the land and with the men and women who teach them. Colleges are watch-towers with wide horizons—training schools for the appreciation of high aims, for that efficiency of leadership which cannot exist without knowledge and without the wisdom that is born to him or to her who uses knowledge well. If women's colleges keep their eyes on the true aim of all colleges, they will stand; if they teach women to compete with men, they will

fall—or, what is worse, they will make women ignoble." [1]

Three years, then, before he became president of Radcliffe, he had given expression to his conception of women's colleges. They should be "training schools for the appreciation of high aims," for "efficiency of leadership" through "the wisdom that is born to him or to her who uses knowledge well"; and they must not teach women to compete with men. Expressed in general terms, such a platform was defensible enough. But how could it be carried into specific practice at Radcliffe College? For despite the fact that Dean Briggs had been elected to a nominal office at a nominal salary, it was somehow taken for granted that he would find time to do much more than the letter of the agreement required.

III

His mere presence brought something of the improved state toward which friends of Radcliffe had looked. The relations with Harvard were no longer quite so precarious; everyone felt this fact. The *Lampoon* represented Dean Briggs in a great president's chair with college girls draped all about

[1] From the volume issued by Smith College on the occasion of the quarter-centenary. Quoted by permission.

him; and the undergraduates said that Radcliffe must not be such a bad institution, after all, if Dean Briggs deigned to have anything to do with it. The public more seriously looked upon the new arrangement as promising much; Radcliffe became more acceptable in the eyes of the world. Mrs. Agassiz, who lived for four years after she retired from the presidency, rejoiced perhaps more than anyone else at the new stability, this being "anchored against the whole teaching force of Harvard."

But the friends of Radcliffe had reasoned wisely: a man of President Briggs's character could not be expected merely to come to his office occasionally for a brief period and meet occasionally with the Associates (the governing board) or the Academic Board (the committee of professors in charge of instruction). Before long he saw other ways in which he might help to make Radcliffe "respectable." "Radcliffe," said Professor K. G. T. Webster, head of the Academic Board, "would have been grateful enough to have him simply as a beneficent figure-head, a protecting personage, a wise and experienced chairman of her various boards. She got all of this and something more which was of greater value; namely, a man of unbounded humanity who put all

his abilities unreservedly at the service of the institution."

He "put all his abilities unreservedly at the service of the institution"; and he had opinions of what a college for women should be. But he did not try to force the college into any organized expression of his policy. In truth, he resisted every effort to "make" Radcliffe into anything. He saw how it held a unique position in American education, and consequently how the wholly independent colleges for women offered no great help in developing this one which was at once independent and dependent. He wanted to watch over it and see it grow into its own peculiar destiny. At once his chief traits of character came into play. He was never an organizer, a pusher, but rather an exponent of the thesis of Frederick Converse's *The Pipe of Desire*; namely, that you can force yourself quickly to what you desire, but that you will suffer the loss of yourself in the process. And in no part of his career did he cling with more amiable tenacity to this belief than in his presidency of Radcliffe. He had to defend the view; he was sometimes accused of not being aggressive—a kind of accusation he had heard before. But he was patient.

IV

He exemplified his theory by his own natural, almost imperceptible growth into the life of Radcliffe. He grew into it, just as he had grown into the life of Harvard, by becoming a friend of the students. Girls of college years, no matter how sophisticated they themselves may be, like a genuine, unpretentious man if he is not too near their own age. The new president disappointed the Radcliffe girls a little at first; he was "not exactly a whiz on looks." But he bowed to them everywhere with characteristic chivalry, and such attention they liked. It was soon declared that he lifted his hat to every young lady who passed him on Garden Street, so anxious was he not to miss speaking to one of his Radcliffe girls. And when parents came to visit their daughters in college, they received the private information that the new president was "a perfect old dear." In 1905, only two years after he had assumed the presidency, Mrs. Agassiz referred to him as "a charming man and a great favorite with the students."

Of course, he found that dealing with women students brought some new problems; and the young women had to discover that their "perfect old dear"

of a president could not be cajoled out of being just. He customarily did not confuse justice and kindness—some of his friends said he never did—and the news of this fact had to make its way abroad. A senior who, because of her negligence, was about to be denied her degree—although she possessed more than ordinary intellectual power—carried her case to President Briggs for final decision. At the end of a half-hour she emerged from the president's office, her cheeks flushed and her eyes full of tears.

"Don't you get your degree?" a classmate asked, sympathetically.

"No, I don't," she replied. And then as she hurried away she added, "But he's right."

Likewise were they obliged to learn that he was constantly thoughtful of them as individuals. They had heard that he was known to Harvard men for such thoughtfulness, but it was rumored that he liked men better than women. Since he was only a part-time president of Radcliffe, it seemed reasonable—to minds heretofore none too generously regarded, and perhaps piqued a little by jealousy—that he must be less thoughtful of them than of the men. In his mind, were Radcliffe girls individuals or only an agreeable educational entity? They had to learn in their own way.

One woman, now as then a loyal worker for Radcliffe, had been elected to the presidency of an undergraduate club, and in her eagerness to have a successful administration she bethought herself of inviting the president of the college to speak at the first meeting of the college year. Her enthusiasm was contagious; the president accepted her invitation. In the autumn she proudly posted notices on the bulletin boards that President Briggs would speak at the first meeting. A few days later she was enraged to learn from the bulletin boards that the president had accepted an invitation to speak before the Student Association—which included all of the students of the college—only a week after he was to address her club—which included only a third, at most, of the students. How could he take away the exclusive distinction of her meeting by speaking so soon thereafter to all of the students? Of course, she admitted upon reflection, he could scarcely decline the invitation of the association after he had accepted hers.

She went to her room in bad spirit, and suffered more violently still when she found a note from President Briggs in which he asked her to come to his office the next morning. He was going to ask to be excused altogether from speaking before her

club, in order that his appearance before the Student Association might have more effect! The justice of such a proposal she had to admit. Why should he speak twice before the students within a week? Nevertheless, she was going to let him know how much hurt she was, and she was going to make him share her feeling!

She went coolly to the office at the time appointed. "Of course," he began without apology, "you have learned that I have accepted the invitation of the Student Association to speak at their meeting only a week after the meeting of your club. Now I have one pretty good speech, and one that is very poor, and I have no time to prepare another. In the circumstances, I had thought I ought to have you come to my office and choose the one you preferred, since you invited me first and ought to have first choice."

Such small matters may seem of no consequence to iron-gray adults who put through "outstanding enterprises" with hardened thoughtlessness. But to the young—and to a few who remain sensitive despite age—a generous fairness when one scarcely expects it is the most assuring virtue among men—and women. This undergraduate girl went away from the interview convinced that there never was a man

in any college who was half so good as President Briggs. "My only discomfort now," she confesses, "is the terror that still strikes my heart when I think that I ever let myself suppose he could be unfair."

He developed a personal acquaintance with an amazing number of the students. To be sure, the presidency of Radcliffe did not call for the same relation with students that his deanship at Harvard had called for. This difference was once merrily set forth by Miss Marion E. Park, who was called to the presidency of Bryn Mawr from the deanship of Radcliffe, and who, incidentally, declared that there was no one in the world with whom she enjoyed so much to work—and to disagree—as President Briggs. She observed that the difference between a dean and a president is that a dean deals chiefly with prodigals, and a president with the indignantly righteous. And she pictured President Briggs as fleeing from "the complaining and outraged saints at Radcliffe to the penitent and outrageous sinners at Harvard."

Yet he found time—just how, nobody has ever been able to discover—to become acquainted with all sorts of interesting students who had no special reason for exhibiting either their indignation or

their righteousness. Two years after Miss Ada Louise Comstock had succeeded him as president of Radcliffe, she declared it little short of miraculous that he should remember so many of the Radcliffe graduates. " 'There,' he is habitually saying to me when we are together at Radcliffe meetings, 'is Miss X of the class of 1910—or '12 or '15 or '20. She was one of the finest girls of her time.' Or, 'Why, there is Mrs. Y; she was Miss A before she was married. They live in Los Angeles now.' "

His acquaintance with these women while they were undergraduates slowly changed the character of the institution. He commanded their respect. He won their affection. He set for them the highest possible standards of loyalty and conduct. Thanks to the feeling of responsibility which his devotion and that of the other officers of Radcliffe developed among the students, he was one year able to say, despite the increased enrollment, "Throughout the year no serious case of discipline occurred." [1]

V

His method, then, began steadily to emerge. For him it was the inevitable method. Through a high respect for the individual he was to move everyone

[1] Report to the Associates for 1909-10.

to high individual endeavor. He lost no opportunity to give public recognition to work unselfishly done, either by students or by his fellow-officers. At Commencement in 1910, he had occasion to speak of Miss Irwin, who had retired the year before from her long and successful career as Radcliffe's first dean. Yet he was careful to let Miss Irwin's successor feel that he appreciated her work thoroughly. "No one can fill Miss Irwin's place, or the place of anyone who has individuality and power. Every dean can do some things that no other dean can do. To this rule our new dean [Miss Coes] is no exception. Not a man or a woman in the world loves Radcliffe College as she loves it, or has the confidence of more of its alumnæ and its undergraduates. She has faced a difficult year bravely and come through it well.".

It must not be inferred that his battles for the individual were wholly offensive battles. No one was readier than he to admit that his position was open to attack; and occasionally the attack was made. Especially after the World War was he assailed for his unflinching practice of treating every life as if it were precious. At Radcliffe, as at every other college in the country, the air was full of revolution

and all sorts of good and bad proposals for reconstruction. It must now be said, as we are able to see a little more clearly in retrospect, that it became all too popular to "investigate" every professor and every student supposed to have "new" ideas, and to brand all such persons as dangerous, if they did nothing more than to quote publicly from Milton's *Areopagitica* or some forgotten section of the Declaration of Independence. Since the professors at Radcliffe are only borrowed Harvard professors, and since Harvard has dared to keep men of ability and conscientiousness despite their utterances on public questions, there was no special movement against the teaching force. But all sorts of persons, including the Vice-President of the United States, assailed the students; and after using dishonest evidence to prove their p o i n t, some of them denounced President Briggs for letting the young women of his college "go bolshevik." He never "replied" to this criticism, but once in the earlier part of the campaign against the colleges he discussed the matter publicly, and his address was afterward printed. He was generous, deliberate, and reasoned, but he spoke with directness:

"The college that lives not for itself only, must

cherish 'the honest liberty of free speech,' first, because free speech is essential to that intellectual freedom without which the search for truth is a mockery, and next because, with the young and daring, suppression breeds anarchy, whereas in discussion reason has at least a chance of success and speech is a safety valve. We cannot restrict our students' talk among themselves; we cannot say definitely with whom outside of the college they may or may not talk. We may and we should refuse the admission of incendiary persons to college buildings, and may thus do something to protect the students within our walls; we may and should give temperate advice to those who seem in need of advice; but the problem of facing the radicalism of to-day is inescapable. Shall we try to choke this radicalism, shall we give it the satisfaction and the happy notoriety of martyrdom, persecuting it into popularity among young people who have not half thought it out? Or shall we by discussion and by stimulus to reason help them to think it out? Always to distinguish folly from crime, the immature but generous enthusiast from the deliberate poisoner of the mind and heart, is beyond the power of any institution. Yet this is our problem, and we must meet it with infinite

patience, never forgetting that much which was once heresy is now truth." [1]

His confidence in the individual, even the "wild" individual, was as great at the end of his presidency as at the beginning. At Commencement in 1923—his last one—he took occasion to discuss the matter in the course of his address. After he had made the observation that a question more burning than that of the open and closed shop was the question of the open and closed mind, he said: "So long as the human race breeds spirited youth, so long will youth agitate reform. Much of the agitation passes off in time, after producing no little trouble among teachers, families, and friends. No boy or girl of spirit grows up without threatening to wear the life out of older people who do not care to be disturbed. Nature is as prodigal of agitation as she is of fishes' eggs, and scarcely a larger per cent of it reaches maturity and gives sustenance to mankind; but in that small per cent lies progress, or, it may be, salvation. Though the reformer is inconvenient, we should have without him a sorry world. There has been no more disquieting citizen of an orthodox

[1] Address at the midwinter meeting of the Alumnæ Association, 1920. Published in the *Radcliffe Quarterly*, March, 1920.

community than he who brought to it and to us a more abundant life." [1]

VI

The development of individuals of power, however, requires a variety of courses of instruction, a diversified body of students, and funds for the maintenance of teachers and the construction and maintenance of buildings. The way was open to a steady increase in the variety of courses offered. But the funds for carrying out a policy of material growth were not available. Despite the heroic devotion of the women who had worked for Radcliffe, the funds when Dean Briggs became president were —according to twentieth-century standards—almost negligible, and the buildings were wholly inadequate. Radcliffe, it must be remembered, had started with nothing. President Briggs once remarked that the only institution which might reasonably be said to have started with less was Booker T. Washington's, which had only a henhouse to begin with, whereas Radcliffe had had a comfortable room or two in the dwelling-house of a generous man and woman. On another occasion he pleasantly referred to the Radcliffe "campus" as "composed chiefly of a few back

[1] Published in the *Radcliffe Quarterly*, July, 1923.

yards and an under-sized apple tree." Approximately expressed, the resources of the institution when he became president consisted of three buildings and the money for a fourth, and funds—including scholarships—amounting to less than a half-million dollars. In other words, the physical resources of Radcliffe were not greater than those of many an unheard-of, struggling college in the remotest interior of the country.

President Briggs gave himself immediately and persistently to this financial need. Despite his unobtrusiveness, he soon proved that he could beg as relentlessly as anyone. In truth, of the twenty reports which he submitted to the Associates during his administration, only two refrain from discussion of the financial needs of Radcliffe, and these two were submitted in war-time. "Presidents' reports," he wrote in one of his own, "have been called 'beggars' annuals,' and this report is no exception." In 1905–06 he found the resources of the institution "too slender to be looked at by any but the courageous."

After Agassiz House had been completed—the money for it had been secured before Dean Briggs assumed the presidency of Radcliffe—effort was successfully concentrated on a library, and then

upon a dormitory to take its place beside Bertram Hall in the new quadrangle on Shepard Street. By 1908 these had been erected and put to use. By 1914 two other dormitories had been added, and the pressure for living space was somewhat relieved. The need for classrooms and offices, however, was still great. In fact, it was almost as great as when President Briggs, in an effort to reveal the cramped condition of the institution, had reminded the Associates that the Dean's assistant was obliged to work "in what is little more than a lighted closet, with none of the quiet which the word closet implies." And the endowment funds, though they had grown, had not caught up with the requirements of the hour.

The World War broke up the ordered plans for a better Radcliffe, just as it broke up the plans of every other college that gave itself loyally to the country. But as soon as the war was over, Radcliffe began immediately on a campaign for endowment. President Briggs could see a short distance ahead when what he called the inevitable arithmetic of time would decree that he give up some of his over-many duties, and he wished to have this campaign completed before that day arrived.

He would minimize his own importance in that financial enterprise. The woman who was chairman

of the committee of alumnæ, however, has repeatedly expressed the opinion that the efforts of all the rest would have been unavailing had they not been supported by the assiduous labors and the national reputation of the president of the college. He contributed to booklets; he wrote letters of introduction; he put the committee in possession of information about men and women who might become friends of the college; and he himself secured the largest personal contribution made in the course of the campaign. Harvard had undertaken to add fifteen millions of dollars to her own funds, and this fact made it more difficult for Radcliffe to appeal to any Harvard graduate or to any friend of Harvard. President Briggs, moreover, an officer of Harvard even more than of Radcliffe, felt that it would be unfair for him to appeal to Harvard men, as a group, in behalf of Radcliffe.

Nevertheless, many Harvard men did interest themselves in the Radcliffe campaign; and it is not too much to say that most of them did so because their own dean, to whom they would forever be attached, was Radcliffe's president. A letter which a committee of Harvard men in Chicago addressed to all the Harvard men of the city is self-explanatory:

If Le Baron Russell Briggs walked into your office and said, "Mr. Blank, I am making a personal appeal for a cause which is dear to my heart, a cause to which I have given twenty years of my life, and want your help," what would any Harvard man anywhere do? He would say, "Dean Briggs, I will do my best."

Now Le Baron Russell Briggs cannot walk into your office in person, but he wants your help. He wants to raise $8,000 in Chicago during the next two weeks.

In addition to the work he does in Harvard College, he has been carrying the burden of the presidency of Radcliffe since 1903. He has been trying to get $1,000,000 for Radcliffe. If he can raise $750,000, the General Education Board will give him $250,000. He has $300,000 more to go. He must have it by January 1st.

It strikes us that under these circumstances it makes no difference whether all our girls are boys, or all our girls go to Vassar, Smith, or Bryn Mawr, or whether we don't believe in higher education, or anything else. Le Baron Russell Briggs is asking for this money and we believe he has done enough for Harvard College, and we all love him enough, to back him to the limit.

Ten dollars from each man in this vicinity will put the Chicago quota over. Checks for greater or less amounts will be gratefully received.

The million-dollar fund set as a goal was secured, and at Commencement in 1923, when Mr. Briggs appeared for the last time as president, he announced the success of the campaign. Immediately after his announcement, Mr. John F. Moors, of the Radcliffe

Council, arose and announced that Radcliffe was to have also a new dormitory, and that it was to be named Le Baron R. Briggs Hall. The joy over this announcement was prevented from being absolute only by the discomfiture of President Briggs, who was obliged to stand with as much patience as possible while the applause swept over Sanders Theater again and again.

VII

He did much, then, to make Radcliffe respectable. He helped to fuse a loose student sentiment into a great loyalty; he made it possible to add many important new courses to the curriculum; and he did his share and more in bringing the modest resources of the institution up to the substantial sum—according to the treasurer's report of 1923—of a little more than four millions of dollars.

And he was able, likewise, to remain firmly on the platform which he declared to be his when he spoke at Smith College in 1900. He never yielded in his contention that colleges for women—and for men—should be "training-schools for the appreciation of high aims"; he never yielded in his contention that colleges for women should not teach women to compete with men.

Le Baron R. Briggs Hall, Radcliffe College

The maintenance of this last contention, as well as the first, required him, at the outset, to take a firm stand concerning the courses of instruction at Radcliffe. The tendency throughout the country to imitate the men's colleges by accepting all sorts of "practical" courses for the A. B. degree never became more than a matter of discussion at Radcliffe. Some of these courses, it is true, were offered; but they were not counted toward an A. B. degree. Radcliffe recognized their practical value to many women, but she placed above this practical value the higher aim of leadership. The affiliation maintained with Harvard made it easy to carry such a policy into execution. Radcliffe had undertaken to admit women only on the basis of the requirements for admission at Harvard, and to certify that the work for the A. B. degree was in every respect the work required at Harvard for the same degree. And Harvard offered no courses in cooking and sewing! Likewise was President Briggs's position strengthened by Harvard's early decision to make business administration and similar vocational studies strictly graduate in character. It could not be argued that since women were changing their economic status they should therefore be allowed to compete with men on even terms by taking the men's vocational

courses; for the men, too, quite happily, were in a college that frankly professed to be "a training-school for the appreciation of high aims," and allowed the men to take their courses in business administration only after the more liberalizing work for the A. B. degree.

In the other sense, too, he maintained to the end that his college women should not compete with men; he would not have them become masculine in their ideals—or lack of them. Not one act of his in twenty years reveals the slightest wavering in his attitude. And when he spoke at his final Commencement, in 1923, he undertook to restate his position, although he thought his words would be "resented by some as invidious, by others as superfluous and out of date."

"As women, genuine women, you will feel no need of proving your liberty by doing the foolish things that, for centuries, men have done and women have abstained from. . . . Much that now passes for women's comradeship with men substitutes a sort of inferior man's comradeship for a genuine woman's, rejecting a privilege and a power beyond the reach of man, falsifying the relative strength of the sexes, selling a birthright for a mess of pottage. In politics men have been notoriously insincere, bargaining,

unscrupulous as to means of bringing about their ends—even those ends that they believe to be good. Will women prove more scrupulous, less willing to bargain? Do their just political rights bid fair to be exercised with sterner conscience than the political rights of men? It is for you to do your part that they shall be.

"In doing it you will seem to me unwise if you pit yourselves against men in an anti-man party. Some measures are, or appear to be, in the interest of women, and will naturally command their votes; but whether in the nation or in the state or in the city or in the family, it cannot but be an error to array the sexes against each other. One way of being a woman is not to emphasize the fact either by excessive femininity or by pseudo-masculine coarseness; one way of being true to sex is by forgetting sex. When a woman has done something well, it seems unwise to trumpet her act as a woman's, as if you were surprised at a woman's amounting to something."

He completed his administration as he had begun it: a man "who loved and reverenced good women beyond all else on earth." He believed in unrestricted opportunities for women, but he hoped that

women would remain out of those occupations where it is easier for them to degrade themselves than to elevate the men with whom they associate. He would not have the college woman a snob who looks upon the everyday duties of the household as beneath her; he would have her feel that her business "is not to scorn the cabbage, but invest it with a rose motive." To the last day of his official career he admired most of all the girl whose "knowledge of good and evil had not stained, but purified" and who "airs the very chambers of the soul with the breath of a courageous faith."

VIII

In the course of twenty years the alumnæ of Radcliffe came to look upon President Briggs with something of the affection with which Harvard men looked upon Dean Briggs. His plainness of feature became a joy to them. They were never amused more than by a man who talked ostentatiously on a Middle Western train one day, in the presence of one of their own number, about living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and knowing "a lot of the university people." "I see the president of Radcliffe College going down the street every morning—a dude who wears spats and a monocle!" They liked their

president's manner, too. He was earnest, but not grave; and he was insuppressibly hopeful.

Once, when the dean of Radcliffe had left her post in term time, he went to Mrs. George P. Baker and asked her to do her college the great favor of acting as dean until a permanent dean could be appointed.

"I am ready to do anything in the world for Radcliffe," she responded—meaning also for the president of it—"if I am qualified. But I am not qualified to be dean."

"Why are you not?"

"Because—because," she answered, hesitantly—"because, to begin with, my first decisions are never the right ones."

"Good!" he exclaimed in glee, springing to his feet. "Then you will accept, after all. Thank you ever so much! Good-by!"

And she served the institution with sympathetic insight not only in this instance, but also when another dean was called away to be a college president.

It was at their annual alumnæ suppers that they had a fair opportunity to express their good will unrestrained. Always their president, the last speaker on the program, had devised startling trivi-

alities and sallies of wisdom to cheer them. At the final supper which he attended as president, they outdid themselves in his honor. Between four and five hundred were present. It was a time of regret, to be sure, but it was also a time of jubilation. The endowment fund had been secured; Miss Comstock had accepted the post left vacant by the resignation of President Briggs; Miss Bernice V. Brown, Radcliffe '16, had accepted the deanship; and Briggs Hall was to be erected at once. There was no escaping the fact that President Briggs was leaving. But he had been theirs for twenty years, and he would always be theirs. President Park of Bryn Mawr, only a year removed from her service as dean of Radcliffe, told with humorous analysis exactly the kind of man President Briggs had been to work with; President Pendleton of Wellesley in her turn discussed the pleasure he had afforded all persons obliged to read the reports of college presidents; President Woolley of Mt. Holyoke discussed in greater detail the influence his humor had had upon American education; and President William Allan Neilson of Smith, who is customarily given to startling audacities, spoke with a brilliant abandon never before heard by his most intimate associates!

It was an evening of glowing good will. The

alumnæ presented Mrs. Baker with a purse of several hundred dollars in appreciation of her generous and painstaking service as acting dean—the second period of such service; the class of 1923 and Mr. Charles Hopkinson, the painter, presented the institution with a portrait of Dean Briggs to be hung in the large parlor of Briggs Hall; and then the alumnæ presented to Mrs. Briggs a graduation bouquet, and to Mr. Briggs a "diploma," "on no condition to be returned, and to serve as a letter of credit and a symbol of our love." Within the "diploma" was a check for twelve hundred dollars which the alumnæ hoped Mr. and Mrs. Briggs would use on a pleasant vacation.

President Briggs was obliged to speak at once, and since he knew that his "diploma" was given in fun, he did not go to the trouble of opening it. It served admirably as something for his nervous fingers to twist and play with while he spoke. As he became more and more interested in his address, the diploma suffered more and more in his hands. "He's tearing it up! Don't you see he's tearing it up? Just look at him!" whispered President Neilson, who sat next the chairman. But she would not interrupt the speech, although she saw check and all being reduced to a crumpled mass. Here was

suspense for the listeners that they had not counted on. They not only listened breathlessly to his every word, but watched breathlessly his every movement to see whether any of the check was to survive.

They finally heard the serious part of his farewell as if it were spoken by a prophet. Then they went their ways, regretful but joyous. Within a day or two the president of the Alumnæ Association received the following letter:

BOURNEDALE,
June 21, 1923.

DEAR MRS. MULLER:

After all that the Alumnæ and former students have been doing for the Endowment Fund, what they did for me last night is overwhelming. They ought not to have done it; but since they have done it, I can only accept their gift and be grateful.

My maltreatment of the diploma, though unconscious, was peculiarly inexcusable; for I supposed it to be a real diploma. At the least hint of suspicion of what was in it I should have opened it on the spot and have found speaking scarcely possible. Not expecting the Alumnæ to give me anything, I inferred that Miss Kimball's remark about breach of precedents referred to some quasi-membership, some outside alliance, with the Alumnæ Association. Almost immediately I had to speak. When all was over and you said, "There really is something in that," I opened the roll, too late to express thanks, even if I could have found words for them. The trouble was neither ingratitude nor intoxication, but a nervous system which weari-

ness and excitement had temporarily disheveled and which is now in the repair shops at Half-way Pond.

Will you kindly make clear to the Alumnæ, by this letter or otherwise, that my gratitude, though clumsy, is deep and everlasting.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

L. B. R. Briggs.

This spirit of family cheerfulness, family understanding, did not forsake him when Briggs Hall was erected. It might well be assumed that a man approaching seventy and retiring from office would become a little grave at the sight of a memorial in his honor. Of course, he could not prevent people from giving the handsome dormitory in his name if they wished to do so. But it was something of a joke—this building of halls in honor of unimportant people—more of a joke, perhaps, than writing books about them! The work on the building proceeded, but he never mentioned either that fact or the building itself. "You know he's modest," explained one of his intimate friends to another who wished he himself might have known of the project. "But he might as well learn now that he's got to get over his modesty," the other replied with disappointment that was almost indignation. Nevertheless, he knew that

if the modesty should disappear, all the other elements of the man's life would be disarranged beyond identity.

It is doubtful if a more appreciative man ever lived. Of course he appreciated the building. But he did not wish to dwell upon the enterprise. The architects and the committee in charge, desiring to profit by his experience, asked him to meet with them when they were working out some of the important details of the interior; this was to be something of a model hall of residence. He met with them, only to be constantly breaking away from the serious discussion with some new story he had heard down in the Plymouth woods.

The building was completed in the autumn of 1924. But it had to be dedicated. In truth, the corner stone had to be laid after the building was ready for occupancy and was occupied. This reversal of procedure afforded him a clue for his brief address at the dedication. Fortunately his words were taken down by a stenographer.

"Friends and Lovers of Radcliffe:

"In corner stones my experience is limited; my ignorance is not. When I was young, the building was built on the corner stone; the corner stone was

not shoved under the building with all the people living in it. The new order reminds one of "Sentence first, verdict afterwards" in the trial of the Knave of Hearts.

"And I am even less experienced in corner-stone oratory. My friend, Professor Edwin Hall, has favored me with a sample in the complete speech of an engineer on an occasion resembling this. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he said, 'when in the course of human events it becomes necessary to lay a corner stone, we lay it.' Why say more? This tells the whole story.

"Yet not the whole, either. In a certain sense this inverted process of construction symbolizes the rise of the Harvard Annex, whence came Radcliffe College. The Harvard Annex was in full swing before it had any building at all or a penny to build one. As with this hall, so with the Annex, the preposterous chronological sequence was apparent rather than real. The Annex stood fast: for the corner stone of the Annex was faith; and faith, you know, is the substance of things hoped for.

"This building is a Radcliffe building through and through. It is built by Radcliffe herself; every commemorative part of it commemorates some friend of Radcliffe; even the architects got into Radcliffe

as far as they could by marrying Radcliffe women—and Radcliffe women of the dyed-in-the-wool variety. If anything is Radcliffe a hundred per cent pure, it is this hall. Our architects have done well. The hall is good to look at and good to live in. As architects they know; as husbands of Radcliffe they care.

"How to thank people who name a building after you is another strain on experience. I have rarely felt more grateful—or less competent. My heart expands, and my head shrinks. To work for Radcliffe is an anxious pleasure and a high one. Though by no means identical with virtue, it is like virtue in being its own reward. To work for Radcliffe through twenty years and then to lay the corner stone of your own monument, already erected, is not merely a *memento mori;* it is a cordial to warm the heart and a challenge to search it. The search reveals imperishable faith. Less than fifty years ago, even the Annex was a dream of Arthur Gilman and his wife. To-day Radcliffe College is a solid reality."

And then, in characteristic fashion, he turned from what some one might think of as his own work and closed with a reference to the future: "Yet it was only last year that Radcliffe College found and

chose her corner stone. She found it—strong and true—in the woman who is now her president. The new president carries a load as limitless as that of Atlas; but in her load as in his there is light for all mankind."

IX

He gave his best to Radcliffe—the best he had to give when so many other obligations called to him. And to make the record of his fidelity complete, after he had retired from the presidency he allowed himself to be made a member of the Associates, where he might continue to be, as his successor in office expressed it, "an aid and a comfort as long as he lives."

CHAPTER VII

Horses, Dogs, and Dahlias.

I

DEAN BRIGGS'S accumulated tasks were too heavy to be carried by anyone without recourse to invigorating distraction. Being at the same time a university teacher, a dean, a guiding mind in intercollegiate sports, and the president of a college for women is not conducive to faultless digestion and untroubled sleep.

Some small part of the necessary relaxation he found without leaving Cambridge. Home was an interesting place, and home was relaxation after the telephone had become a little quiet in the evening. He could sometimes find a few minutes for reading, and when his eyes began to feel heavy, he could doze before the fire while Mrs. Briggs read or crocheted or saw the children to bed. He himself often read bedtime stories to the children. And such a list as these children heard! They were not pampered with specially made stories for the young, but listened to stories from the *Odyssey*, which he trans-

lated as he read, to Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, to *Morte d'Arthur*, to *Pilgrim's Progress*, to *Gulliver's Travels*, to *Don Quixote*, to *Ivanhoe*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and *Marmion*, to *Water Babies*, to *Evangeline* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. These the children enjoyed enthusiastically, and they seem to have developed a readiness to do such reading on their own initiative; for once when Mrs. Briggs had punished her first-born by shutting him in his bedroom, she discovered when she went to announce the expiration of his term of sentence that the punishment had carried no terror at all. He was deeply buried in a large volume of Bunyan!

In Cambridge, too, was the Shop Club, a very informal club of some of his colleagues and their wives. Pompous social affairs he disliked, and he avoided as many of them as possible. "Just look at poor Mr. Briggs," a Cambridge lady exclaimed one evening when he was in the receiving line at a reception. "He looks as if he had been pecked by every woman in the house!" And it is not to be denied that he was at his worst in evening clothes. But in friendly visiting with people who did not require him to demonstrate, he found great pleasure. Such unpretentious association the Shop Club afforded. In it he could enjoy an evening with such

men as J. H. Beale, F. W. Taussig, E. F. Gay, E. H. Hall, Kuno Francke, E. S. Sheldon, W. W. Fenn, Ephraim Emerton, E. L. Mark, and W. M. Davis. Neither they nor their wives expected of him more than stories which he liked to tell and an occasional paper—usually a humorous one—which he did not dislike to write. Schedules, discipline, and endowment campaigns had small place in these fortunate evenings.

A little of his thought was diverted also to the Animal Rescue League. He loved animals, he did not want them to suffer, and he found it possible to be one of the vice-presidents of an organization devoted to animals' comfort. That the league is not a mere name may be seen by the fact that in one period of three months it rescued and humanely cared for 28,153 cats, 2,908 dogs, 130 horses, and 241 other animals.[1] It tenders the services of a trained veterinarian without fee, and maintains an animal cemetery. Here was an occasional moment of diversion for a mind weary of college matters, although one of the Dean's students once remarked that the purpose of an Animal Rescue League was not sufficiently different from that of a college office to provide distraction unqualified!

[1] Report of the president, September, 1924.

There were other enterprises that afforded moments of diversion. Only the Dean himself could give a complete list of them, and he probably never will. He busied himself with the welfare of negro servants who were out of employment; he attended symphony concerts; he was often at the baseball games of major-league teams. Few "fans" have possessed a more thorough knowledge of the playing qualities and the personal qualities of the major-league players from the youthful days of John McGraw to the boisterously youthful days of Babe Ruth. In all sorts of unexpected places he was continually appearing on unacademic errands. So widely did he become known for being in remote places within a few minutes after somebody had seen him leaving his office, that his journeyings were a delight to the cub newspaper reporter whose editor demanded a "story." One such "story" about him—a typical one—reported that he had appeared in a police station in Boston and said that he wished to go to Fleet Street to recover a lost dog. He did not know whether a visit to that quarter of the city would require police protection or not. No one at the station seemed to be any more certain than he was. So, according to the account, he decided to "chance it" alone.

II

But complete escape, if he ever enjoyed it, came only when he could steal away to his country retreat seven or eight miles southwest of Plymouth. Many years ago he and his brother and brother-in-law succeeded in acquiring all the land fronting on Halfway Pond, a beautiful small lake with a wooded island rising in the middle of it, and with a hilly shore, somewhat wooded, that gives one a distinct impression of Scotland. No one who has not seen the Pond could easily believe that there was such unspoiled beauty left within easy reach of any city in the United States. On a point of land on the east side of the lake the Briggses built a comfortable house among the oaks and pines. It fronts the southeast, so that one may see the lake—and at some hour of the day the sun—from every room in the house. Here Dean Briggs could find diversion if it could be found anywhere.

No other place could have served him half so well. In order to get there he had to pass through Plymouth, where all the attachments of his early life were only waiting to draw him away from thought of academic duties. He could saunter about in the grocery stores and buy his own provisions, or bon-

bons for his children or grandchildren, and be known familiarly to everyone. He could thrust his head in at the door of his Grandfather Russell's house and call a cheery, "Hello in there!" to his cousin, Miss Lucia Hedges, sole occupant of the house. Inside, there on the wall of the best front room hangs the captain's commission issued to his grandfather in 1794—"to Nathaniel Russell, Gentleman"—by Samuel Adams, "Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth." If one is to judge by the magnificence of the sword that went with the commission, captains were few in those new days of the Republic. And there on the other side of the room is the chair that Governor Bradford brought over in the uninviting days of the Pilgrims. The tenacious demands of the College Yard could not withstand Plymouth, with so many personal associations, with its busy concern about its own history, and with tourists who look into the expansive harbor at low tide and ask "if the land out there is always wet like that."

On the way out from Plymouth to the Pond, one passes the last house along the road three miles distant from the Briggses' retreat. Then there are only sandy, unfenced roads, and rolling, Scottish

hills. To the summits of these quiet, undismayed hills the Dean often rides one of his favorite horses and, resting in the saddle, enjoys the beauty and the silence, with only the friendly, impatient glance of his mount to remind him that he is not absolutely alone. Once, at the close of the World War, when he was Exchange Professor at the Sorbonne, one of his many students in the American army walked with him across Pont Alexandre III just when the purple brilliance of twilight was descending upon Paris. They stopped and looked about them at the mysterious beauty with which the pale light invested everything. "Marvelous!" exclaimed the young officer. "Beautiful!" responded Dean Briggs. And then, after a moment, he added, "But I prefer my Plymouth woods."

In the earlier days, before the automobile, going from Cambridge for a few days of respite in term time, especially in winter, was no small undertaking. The trip from Boston to Plymouth had to be made by train, and then the journey across country by horse-drawn vehicle of some sort. A drive through the drifted snow and a roaring fire in the great fireplace were guaranteed to chase away the most hideous spooks of a college office. He could go to bed

whenever he liked—which was early; and he could get up whenever he liked—which also was early.

It was the summer vacations in the woods, however, that saved him. Usually by Commencement Day, regardless of the efforts he had made to keep fit, his face was a little thinner, a little more nervously responsive, and he found himself tempted to sleep at the wrong time, and unable to sleep through the night. Usually on the afternoon of Commencement Day, or the following morning, he and the family were ready to depart for the country.

This summer departure of the Briggses was an important event, not only for them, but for their intimate and admiring neighbors in Cambridge. It was discussed freely in advance, without any effort to make it more of an occasion of state than the facts justified. In the days of horses, after everything that might possibly be useful had been piled on or tied on, the driver, in country clothes that rendered him virtually unidentifiable, took such seat as he could find, and guided this interestingly loaded wagon toward Plymouth—as far as was possible the first day. After the Dean had purchased a Ford and had learned to drive it, the trip was made in a shorter time; but its essential characteristics remained unchanged.

No one was amused at the lark of these trips, the utter informality of them, so much as the Briggses themselves. Sometimes the informality became an absolute incognito. Once, after the children were out of college and away from home, Dean Briggs and Mrs. Briggs started on this annual pilgrimage rather late in the forenoon. In the front seat of the Ford sat Mr. and Mrs. Briggs with bundles all about their feet. Behind them in the tonneau were numerous other bundles. On the rear seat sat Fritz, the great St. Bernard, and beside him rested a brooder of young chickens which the Dean had "started" in the basement of the president's residence at Radcliffe College. As the hour for luncheon approached, they saw that they would be unable to reach the Pond. So at one o'clock they drew up before a comfortable inn where good meals were served. But while they glanced about at their belongings preparatory to climbing out, a bell-boy came to the door and begged to inform them that they could not be served; the luncheon hour was past. The luncheon hour past at one o'clock? The Dean burst into shrewd laughter. The innkeeper did not wish to have them sit among his genteel guests! And they drove merrily on until they found a less scrutinizing landlord.

III

Everything at the Pond called for "the objective life." The Dean could go about the house, the row-boats, the shed full of vehicles, the stable of horses, the vegetables and the flowers, without invitation to think about college. It was something miles away; always waiting, to be sure, and he should be glad to see it when the appropriate time came; but not now. If he wished to study a little, or answer the letters that his secretary in University Hall let filter through to him, he could go to his study in the trees overlooking the lake not far from the house, and find the required seclusion. But for the greater part of each day he could busy himself with things he liked, especially his horses, dogs, and dahlias.

He liked any kind of friendly horse, but for use he inclined to well-bred, nervous animals—the kind that stand up on their hind legs in their eagerness to be off. A girl who went to visit his daughter Lucia one summer was rather startled when he carefully called her attention to a special step attached to the rear of the vehicle in which they were driving. "For," he explained, "this horse sometimes stands up so straight that I am afraid he might one day come over backward, and we'd need to get out by a

special exit." Such horses he would drive skillfully through the narrow roads in the woods, deftly missing the trunks of trees and carefully lifting his free arm to ward off low branches as he sat sidewise, talking the while with interest to the friends in the rear seat.

And such horses he enjoyed riding. Perhaps in no other manner did he reveal so perfectly the singular mixture of gentleness and strong will that made his character remarkable. His sister, Mrs. Barker, has said that one of her liveliest recollections of her younger brother was as he customarily appeared at her house beyond the Pond on one of his restless horses. Without dismounting, he would whistle or call. Some one would go out and ask him to come in. But he could not. He feared his horse might chill a little. Besides, he could stay only a minute. An additional member of the family would appear; and then another; and finally all of the household. The Dean would think of a good story to tell them. But his horse was very restless. Then, with all of them trying to hear while they dodged the horse as he backed and pawed and swung about, the Dean would tell them the story—and perhaps another and another.

He was not concerned exclusively with young

horses—perhaps not chiefly. Often he bought a horse that had served some one faithfully in the city but was no longer equal to the demands of city traffic. Such a horse Dean Briggs would take to the country and give such a sleek, happy old age as few horses can hope to have. Good feeding, and turf to walk on, and abundant quiet soon started the work of rehabilitation; and so efficacious was the method that a horse fifteen or twenty years old often came into a useful and mischievous second youth. Occasionally he sold a horse; but not often, and then usually on condition that it be well cared for. If he prized a horse highly, it never went into another's keeping. As long as it enjoyed life, it had life to enjoy; and when life began to be a burden to it, its life was humanely taken.

Horses were an intimate part of his scheme of things. More than once he has confessed to his friends that had it not been for horses, he should have broken down long ago. Hector, Robin, Pippa, Greylock, Dixie, and Aristos have their place in any account of the Dean's contribution to the life of America. They restored him to peace and vigor and confidence. All the while, too, he was making them into better horses. The sly humor that piqued college students into renewed struggle gave his horses their

singular mixture of good nature and deviltry. In the full tide of the automobile, when Dean Briggs had but two old horses in his stable, he kept a notice just back of the stalls which in its specific directness characterized both his horses and himself—especially since the horses numbered only two: "Keep out of reach of the heels of the chestnut horse in the open stall, and do not go near the mare in the box stall.—L. B. R. B."

As for dogs, their devotion to the Dean was so great that a record of daily activities at the Pond would tax the capacity of the most credulous mind. Their conduct cannot be explained as the simple expression of an instinct guiding them to a beneficent source of supply. If he got up from his place before the fire and moved to the desk at the end of the room, a dog—quite often two of them—would get up from the floor beside the chair where he had sat and move with alacrity to the new location. If he came back to his chair before the fire within ten seconds, the dog followed him back. When he moved, a dog or more moved with the precision of an automaton. A woman who first visited the Pond when the Briggses possessed two handsome pointers was concerned when she saw these dogs following every move the Dean made. "But after a time," she

Dean Briggs and One of His Dogs

Half-Way Pond, Plymouth

said, "I saw that it was not unusual. Wherever he went he was sure to be accompanied by a cloud of witnesses."

Across the lake his brother-in-law possessed two dogs of genial temper. Frequently, if not daily, they would swim the lake to the island in the middle, walk along the shore round the island to a point opposite the Briggses' house, and then swim over, in all a half mile or more. Then after a pleasant half-hour or so they would return by the same route.

Fritz, the great St. Bernard rescued by the Dean in the dog pound at Boston, lived with a devotion that moved one to pathos—when it did not move one to laughter. He was strictly a man's dog. The girls at Radcliffe would "rave" over him, but he would only look painfully bored and walk away. When a man sat down in his presence, he would walk over, push his nose up close enough to look into the man's eyes with magnificent sympathy, and then return to his place by the Dean's chair. Once when a guest was at the Pond and a steak had just been brought from Plymouth and placed on the table in the kitchen, the family were amazed to learn that the steak had disappeared. Just what vague stirrings of affection had moved Fritz, it would be difficult to say; but he had carried the steak to Dean Briggs's

bedroom and carefully buried it under the Dean's pillow!

If one would have a glimpse of absolute good will on earth, one need only to see Dean Briggs sitting on the piazza overlooking the Pond, with a stoutish dog, half blind with age, resting his chin on the Dean's knee, cheerfully waiting not merely a minute, but an hour, for the book or the newspaper to be put aside.

Dogs took care of themselves; but dahlias had to have persistent attention. They must be off to a good start in the early summer, and they must be constantly cultivated and dressed up; and as they become tall and heavy they must have stakes for support. And when the sandy knoll among the trees has as many as twelve hundred plants on it, giving support to the top-heavy is no small matter. So he had much to do. Sometimes he felt that his ambitions in the early summer had been too great; diversion began to take on the character of work. But he persisted—though in some years he reduced the size of the bed. They grew so luxuriantly that, despite the liberal use of stakes, some of them always were going to the ground. Guests at the house were startled when he walked in and announced in regretful voice that Gladys Sherwood had fainted. They

were relieved, but the Dean was not, when they learned that it was only a dahlia.

In a period of several years, he grew five hundred varieties or more. In a given year the varieties were many. Late in August or early in September, if the season was a good one, the family were kept busy suggesting new places to put the cut flowers. If there were not enough places, what difference did it make? Just to have the plants grow so willingly and fill this corner of the lake-front with their gorgeous colors was worth all the effort and more. And to see Dean Briggs standing among the growing rows of them, noting their progress since the day before, or snipping off the underdeveloped flowers that the dry weather had caught, his soft brown hat pulled down so closely that the brim curled up from his forehead like that of a farmer boy's hat, was to know that the college office was very, very far away.

Of course there were other things to do. Rowboats sometimes required attention; groceries had to be brought from Plymouth; tires had to be mended; armloads of green corn had to be carried from the field on the hillside to the kitchen; the hens had to be kept in their places; fish had to be caught—if possible; and first novels by recent members of Eng-

lish 5 had to be read and frankly appraised for the benefit of the authors.

And there were drives through the miles of wooded country—with guests, with the family, or alone. This country was undisturbed about keeping down to date, and its inhabitants as well as its scenery were a constant delight to Dean Briggs. The beauty never became flat sentimental beauty. It was always touched with the spirit of the men to whom it belonged: the man, for instance, who gazed at a calf which stood against a board fence with its tail hanging through a knothole, and remarked with ironical humor, "I need a philosopher to tell me how that calf got all the way through that hole except its tail"; or the man who replied, when asked by some tourists "if it would be safe" to leave their automobile—or carriage—by the gate in front of his house, "Oh, perfectly safe; there ain't no Christians livin' here!"

IV

The approach of autumn brought its own preoccupations. If things had to be transported from Cambridge to Plymouth in the early summer, some of them—and other things—had to be transported from Plymouth to Cambridge in the early autumn.

Some things, to be sure, could be left behind; the Dean's well-worn clothing, for instance. If it had seen good service in Cambridge and then another period of good service at the Pond, it was given to somebody who needed it. But giving it away was not always so easy a matter as one might suppose.

Once Mrs. Briggs had decided that a suit of the Dean's was ready for charity, and wrapped it carefully in a good-looking package and requested him to deliver it at a certain address in Plymouth. Reluctantly he agreed to do so. But he did not like the thought of packing this old suit to such an address. Why could he not dispose of it in some other fashion?

The cranberry season was approaching and the transients who did the picking were everywhere along the roads. Why not leave the package by the roadside? Some man who needed an old suit would find it, and he himself would be saved the trouble of delivering it in Plymouth. He dropped it just outside the track of the road, where it could be found readily.

Soon a cranberry picker came along. He was a very honest man. He scrutinized the package, and when he found no mark of identification on the outside, he opened it. Clearly some one had lost a suit

very much needed. On the inside of the coat he found the initials L. B. R. B. It evidently belonged to a man whose name began with B. He made inquiry and learned that a Mr. Barker—Dean Briggs's brother-in-law—lived on the far side of the lake. Conscientiously he journeyed there and informed Mr. Barker that he had reason to believe a suit of clothes which he himself had found by the roadside belonged to him. Mr. Barker, circumspect in matters of dress, viewed the suit and then informed the man that while it did not happen to belong to him, he believed he recognized it, and would see that it was delivered to its rightful owner. In the afternoon he rowed across the Pond and left the suit where it had started on its journey some hours before.

Usually, however, the transactions of the late summer were not so circuitous. There was reason for expedition. The crisp air closely associated in a college teacher's mind with a new academic year could not fail to quicken one. The last rides were taken, the last look at the brilliant reds and yellows and dark greens of the woods. Everything was put in order; and then, in the latter days of September, just in time to begin the college year without hurrying, the Briggses were off for Cambridge.

V

Once more the Dean races up and down the granite stairways. Once more he meets men who shake hands with him vigorously. At luncheon some of them remark to one another: "By George! Have you seen the old Dean? He's as brown as an Indian and as hard as nails, and he swings across the Yard like a freshman!"

CHAPTER VIII

Excursions with the Pen

I

"THE tragedy of his life," a colleague of Dean Briggs's once remarked, "is that by making himself so good a dean, he lost the opportunity to develop his powers as a writer. Not one of the rest of us possessed so fine a literary sense."

The fineness of this literary sense few would deny. Whether or not his lack of opportunity to develop his abilities as a writer is to be regarded as a tragedy must remain a question of preference. If we place a man's daily personal influence above all else, we can be quite content with the loss of whatever the Dean might have written. If we give literary output the high position, then the tragedy was great; for Dean Briggs had time to write little except official reports. A half-dozen small volumes would contain all else that his pen produced. Nor does it represent the quality of the work he could have done in greater freedom. Everything he wrote—or virtually everything—was the hurried product of stolen

moments. If this fact be borne in mind, the output of his pen is not only large, but striking.

II

His writing falls readily into three groups: (1) A considerable body of prose which sprang directly from his academic concerns; (2) some verse and prose which he wrote solely as diversion; and (3) some verse which resulted from the demands of special occasions.

No small part of the serious prose—perhaps most of it—originated in public addresses. Despite his maze of academic duties, he spoke frequently, and before a variety of audiences. He addressed freshmen at the opening of the college year; he spoke before state educational meetings; he talked to schoolboys and schoolgirls about such imposing persons as Ralph Waldo Emerson; he addressed Phi Beta Kappa societies and college graduating classes; he was in constant demand as a dinner-speaker at football celebrations; he addressed students at Yale, Wellesley, Smith, and many other institutions; and he spoke before numerous informal gatherings of one kind or another in the vicinity of Boston. Some of the addresses which he delivered on these occasions were later published as essays.

This practice of making an address serve a double purpose is one which few men can follow with success. The brilliant example which Emerson affords gains its brightness not only from the power with which he succeeded, but from the dullness with which most men have failed. Men rarely remember that merely as emotional or intellectual performances speaking and writing are sharply different. Some men, moreover, are so different in their self-consciousness—or lack of it—when they are speaking and when they are writing solely for print, that their speeches are painfully dependent upon tones of the voice, bodily attitudes, and gestures.

But Dean Briggs's speaking and writing were convertible. He wrote at high tension. He likewise prepared addresses, even when he did not write them out, with an alert, nervous exactitude. Frequently before an appearance in public he was too uncomfortable to sleep. One of his most ardent disciples once declared that he had never seen such a woe-begone spectacle as that which the Dean presented when he once arrived in Philadelphia to deliver an address. He had a cinder in his eye, and he was exhausted from an address the night before and nervous over the one to come a few hours later. As

a result of such extreme nervous expectancy, he always came to the actual speaking still uncomfortable and somewhat depleted; but his subject was in such firm possession of him, had made itself so much a part of him, that he spoke with great earnestness, with a concentration that made the sequence easy for his audience, and with a sensitiveness for the occasion that made his subtle thrusts and sallies the delight of everyone who heard him.

He spoke with a sure sense of fitness, an agreeable unity of tone. Men and women who have heard him for thirty years have declared that they never heard him "out of key." This sense of fitness is all the more to be remarked when it is borne in mind that his addresses were always full of illustrative anecdote and specific instance.

His addresses, moreover, were compact. He employed many closely supporting ideas; he never failed to produce a clear total effect. See, for instance, the address he delivered when the entire country joined in celebrating President Eliot's ninetieth birthday on March 20, 1924. The speakers were many and distinguished, and each of them was asked to limit himself to four minutes. Dean Briggs had been chosen to represent all of the faculties of

the university. He addressed President Eliot in these words:

"You have said that the successes of your administration belong less to you than to the men who worked with you. In that group, as in any group of which you were a member, you were leader by the divine right of natural gifts and commanding character. It is true that the faculties whose greetings I bring to-day worked with you, for they were yours. Yours not because their members believed in all your policies; many did not. You chose them because they loved learning and work and Harvard; and they became yours because they believed in you. Yours, also, because you believed in them. They might oppose you as they would; if they disagreed with you they were ashamed not to oppose you; for you taught them to speak what was in them without favor and without fear. You taught them, also, that you cared for what they thought; that you would listen to it with endless patience and would meet it with uncompromising sincerity, so that no man need leave your presence misunderstanding or misunderstood.

"As a presiding officer you combined dignity with informality. Professor Charles Eliot Norton once pleaded for more meetings of the faculty because

Photo by Keystone View Co.

AT THE CELEBRATION OF PRESIDENT ELIOT'S NINETIETH BIRTHDAY

From left to right: Governor Channing H. Cox of Massachusetts, Chief Justice William H. Taft, President C. T. Greve of the Associated Harvard Clubs, President Eliot, Justice E. T. Sanford (president of the Harvard Alumni Association), President Lowell, President Angell of Yale, Dean Briggs

those meetings afforded opportunities for the study of human nature. Some of us have thought that in your tolerance of prolonged and tiresome debate there was more than patience; there was research. You were studying us all and studying us hard. And when we had rambled till we ourselves were weary, you brought us and the subject home again, summarizing the debate in a few memorable words.

"Of your personal kindness I might say much; for you lost sight of not one man among us. Of your administrative generosity it is enough to say that you gave free use of the university printing press to a faculty minority who wished publicly to combat one of your cherished plans; that the printed argument of this minority was signed by many young instructors whose academic future was in your power, and that at the end of the year certain of the signers whose appointments had expired were promoted to full professorships. In personal matters the strongest man of the faculty was the most self-effacing.

"I remember your saying that, in an address of congratulation read to you at a faculty meeting by Dean Dunbar, the word which you liked best was 'fairness,' and that you liked it best because of your

'somewhat eager nature.' I remember your saying that, when you were chosen president, an old friend asked you what qualities you thought would help most, and that when you said 'energy' he said 'patience.' For energy, patience, fairness, for faith in youth, for noble leadership, for all that you have been and are to us, we, who are proud to have worked with you and for you, the several faculties of the university greet you to-day with gratitude affectionate and abiding."

In such an address there is little, except a special adaptation to a very definite audience, that is unlike his reports as Dean of the College, his essays in such periodicals as the *Atlantic Monthly,* or the following brief passage from an article in a newspaper.

"As to moral aid for the individual students, no one who is not inside of Harvard life can begin to know how many young fellows are aiding the weaker brethren to lead clean, sober, and honest lives; how much responsibility of all sorts the best students will take, not merely for their personal friends, but for anybody that they can help. Some years ago a young man of strange and forbidding character was seen running round and round on a Cambridge

sidewalk, imagining that he was Adam flying from temptation; and though obviously insane he was put into the station-house. The case was made known to a student who as a child had attended the same school. He had never known the sick man much, and had never known good of him; yet he got his release from the station-house, promising to be responsible for him through the night. With the aid of a fellow-student he took into his own rooms the insane man, and gave him the bedroom. He himself with his friend sat up all night in the adjoining study. Into this study the madman would issue from time to time, making night hideous to the two watchers; but they did not lose patience. In the morning the student in charge secured a physician, assumed the responsibility of a guardian, drove with the sick man to the nearest asylum, advanced money (of which he was notoriously short) for necessary expenses, and then, exhausted, hastened to New York to meet his fellow-members of the Hasty Pudding Club (who had started, I believe, the night before) and appeared as a smiling star in the performance for which he had been so strangely prepared. No casual observer would have dreamed that in this apparently thoughtless person

were the quick courage and devotion which made inevitable the acceptance of a revolting service for a youth who was almost an outcast." [1]

In his thinking he was generous, in his speech, considerate. But he was not afraid to be direct. "That man," he declared to a former student concerning a prominent person in American education, "is so crooked I would not trust him behind a fence a foot high." Of another he remarked, "He lies with such ease and evidently with such comfort that his friends do not allow themselves to be offended." And after certain men had lamented the "irreligion" of the students in Cambridge, he observed—this time in an address at Yale—that "the alleged irreligion at Harvard is so fearful that good men will lie about it to save their pupils from its damnation." In his writing, therefore, it might well be taken for granted that there would be an abundance of shrewd wisdom on a variety of subjects, expressed with subtlety and point. The right balance between routine and ideals, the nature of true liberalism, the influence of girls on various kinds of college men, the spiritual power of Emerson, the dangers of soft education, the problems of the woman who would educate herself, the

[1] "Harvard and the Individual," in the Boston *Evening Transcript*, June 24, 1903. Quoted by permission.

relation of the college and the individual, the ultimate advantage of the man or woman who would put aside trivialities and "keep the windows open toward Jerusalem," the joy of an exacting opportunity—all these and many other subjects he touched upon in his four small volumes of essays.[1]

He seemed to believe with Dr. Johnson that the world needs not so much to be informed as to be reminded. So he dealt with everyday subjects—the ones usually forgotten. These he discussed with such directness and with such simplicity that he laid himself open to the charge that he was an old-fashioned man who expressed himself in platitudes!

He was not old-fashioned. No man of his time was more sensitive to the newest turns that social life had taken. A very wise young man, not many years before Dean Briggs retired, wrote and submitted to him a story which was supposed to exhibit certain new discoveries in sex psychology. Dean Briggs read the theme in private and then before the class. The members of the class said little, or nothing at all. The Dean hooked off his glasses with his thumb, made a few humorously cautious remarks, and then

[1] *School, College, and Character,* 1901; *Routine and Ideals,* 1904; *Girls and Education,* 1911; *Men, Women, and Colleges,* 1925. All are published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

devoted himself to a fifteen-minute commentary on "the new sex psychology" which startled even the author of the theme with its penetration. "I took pride," the man said afterward, "in being well informed on this my favorite subject. I thought I had revealed something shockingly new to the Dean. But he knew so much more about the ways of the world than I did, that I felt like a grade-school pupil in a graduate course in philosophy." Evidently he arrived at the state of mind of some freshman whose query once adorned a worn copy of *School, College and Character* in Widener Library: "Who is the fool who thinks he knows as much as Dean Briggs?"

As for speaking in platitudes, he once made adequate reply to all charges when he talked briefly to a graduating class at Radcliffe: "There is no great eternal truth which is not outwardly a platitude, or at least cannot be reduced to one. 'Mr. Cleveland,' said a smart critic, 'is the greatest master of platitude since Washington.' Does anyone question the strength of either Mr. Cleveland or Washington? Will anyone forget them? And if the critic is remembered, may it not be for the singular manner in which his name connects itself with theirs? 'He thinks he has discovered the Ten Commandments,' said a critic of a recent public man. He who moves

men toward righteousness is always, so to speak, a man who has discovered the Ten Commandments, a man to whom old truth presents itself with new force." [1]

It was his constant application of old truth to contemporary life that gave his writing the modest dignity and sure timeliness which prevented it from being platitudinous. He was sensitive enough to feel the slight yet infinite difference between a mere mouthing and a thoughtful statement of some general truth. Always his writing was luminous. He turned the worn phrase far enough away from its customary form to make it take hold. He seized upon the peculiarly right word for an important position and made an entire paragraph pleasantly electric. If one were to raise a serious question about his style, it would have to do with structure. His essays have a clear sequence; but they possess little of the architectonic. They seem to have been developed by a process of extension rather than by a process of construction. Yet when a man writes so that his annual reports on educational matters are awaited by a wide public, and when his essays are read by tens of thousands of discriminating people, there must be something unassailable in his subject

[1] Presiding at Commencement, 1910.

matter and his manner to offset anything the most scrutinizing critic might reveal.

III

Just when Dean Briggs first turned to writing as a pleasant means of escape is not known. It is known that when he took up his duties as a teacher of English he was soon so overwhelmed with work, and so completely associated in the public mind with the profession of teaching, that few people ever thought of him as amusing himself by writing upon whimsical or humorous subjects. Yet he did so write.

The earliest writing of this sort that has been preserved—unless the Dean possesses manuscripts which have not been revealed to anyone—is *The Mirror of the Fairest,* an operetta in four acts. It was first produced at Plymouth in January, 1880. Dean Briggs wrote the libretto, his brother George composed or adapted the music, and their cousin, Miss Joanna Davis, a woman of charming brilliance, directed the initial production. The libretto was later printed and copyrighted and is not yet wholly out of print. Difficult as it is to think of Dean Briggs as having done anything not connected with college discipline, indigent freshmen, intercollegiate athletics, and the education of women, he seems here

at home with his numerous lords and ladies, good fairies, princesses, queens, ruffians, and gnomes. Beautiful ladies gracefully enter in anger and go out in indignation as if they were the creations of Gilbert and Sullivan. Or they sing pathetically:

> Oh deep the plot, and black the art
> That fills a jealous lady's heart.

In an entire lifetime, his pleasant ways of amusing himself never ceased to call forth the exclamations of people who possessed an over-developed sense of dignity. Perhaps the exclamations were never more numerous than in 1891 when Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons published a volume by him called *Original Charades.* This volume was in press at the time President Eliot invited him to become Dean of Harvard College. When he accepted, he told President Eliot that something might occur within a few weeks to cause him to regret having made the appointment. It is not certain what President Eliot thought when his newly appointed dean was publicly hailed as the maker of charades—some have said he was shocked, others that he was amused—but it is certain that the appearance of the volume led some persons to wonder all the more if President Eliot had not made a mistake in naming this trivial young man as

Dean of the College. Was it exactly proper for a man in such an important educational position to write charades? Thirty-five years later, when the intelligence of the nation was centered on the solution of cross-word puzzles, the question might not have been pressed. But no matter; for not even in 1891 did the question trouble Dean Briggs. The charades were written; they were published; he was Dean of the College; and he was writing some more charades with which to enlarge one of the later editions of the volume. Not only that; he was perfectly content that the charades be reprinted in almanacs. The almanacs would scarcely suffer! He later appeared in *Life*.

His range was wide: Lohengrin, catacomb, pitchfork, dumpling, nightmare, muffin, blockhead, humbug, Ivanhoe, larkspur, iodine, mandrake, cowlick, hippopotamus, Washington, nutmeg, Manhattan, isinglass, mendicant, and bugbear were among the many answers in the index of the enlarged volume of 1895. His skill not even the horrified could deny.

XVII

My First

Black is the night, and black the wintry sky;
Black is the orb of fond Xarifa's eye;

Black are the locks of Andalusia's maids,
The boding raven's wing, the ace of spades,
And traitors' hearts, and mournful cypress trees:
But I in blackness yield to none of these.

MY SECOND

Hail, kindly Culture, rich in chaste delights,
Who softenest the minds of brutish wights!
No more the tender throat of maid or wife
Is rudely threatened by the treacherous knife.
Avaunt, Discourtesy, thou churl abhorred!
I have redeemed the hospitable board.

MY WHOLE

Through the hot noontide of a summer's day
The sweating farmer stacks the new-made hay.
Strewing the breezes with a fragrance rare,
He heaves the sunny burden high in air.
The fields are glad; the skies serenely shine:
The world is his to-day; the humble service mine.

XX[1]

If a chicken
Droop and sicken,
Ten to one it has my first.
If a baby
Cry, it may be
That my second is the worst
Ill he's heir to;
Yet it's fair to

[1] The numerals indicate the position of the charades in the revised edition of 1895, now long out of print. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Dean Briggs

Question whether in my whole
(Out of season)
Lies the reason
Why his tears defy control.

XLI

"Go, lovely rose," he said, and sighed;
"Alas for human things accurst!
Tell her to tame her beauty's pride,
There's not a rose without my first."

Hugged in my second's fierce embrace,
The stoutest wrestler stands aghast,
Horror has blanched his manly face,
The ruthless captor holds him fast.

Our fathers called my whole my first,
And still the old confusion lingers:
Show me the pretty girl that durst
Handle my first with gloveless fingers.

XL

My First

Bake! Bake! Bake!
On the shining shore of the sea.
With never a question of indigestion
You gorge yourself with me.

My Second

Doubt! Doubt! Doubt!
If the tongue and the heart agree,
To the mind that hesitates speech necessitates
Frequent use of me.

MY WHOLE

Shout! Shout! Shout!
The skipper afloat on the sea,
The screaming eagle, the yelping beagle,
They vex the heavens with me.

He amused himself, too, with the writing of humorous papers in the manner of Mr. Dooley. When some academic solemnity began to bear too heavily upon him, or when he wished to put a little of his philosophy before his friends, he could push Mr. Dooley ahead of him as a spokesman. When, for instance, Prince Henry of Prussia was to be at the university in 1902 as an honored guest, and the magnificence began to pall upon the Dean, he could laugh it all into the clouds by preparing—and reading to the Shop Club—a paper entitled "Mr. Dooley Comments on the Speech of President Eliot on the Occasion of the Visit of Prince Henry of Prussia." And a few years later, when President Lowell was inaugurated, Mr. Dooley again commented—genially, philosophically, humorously.

IV

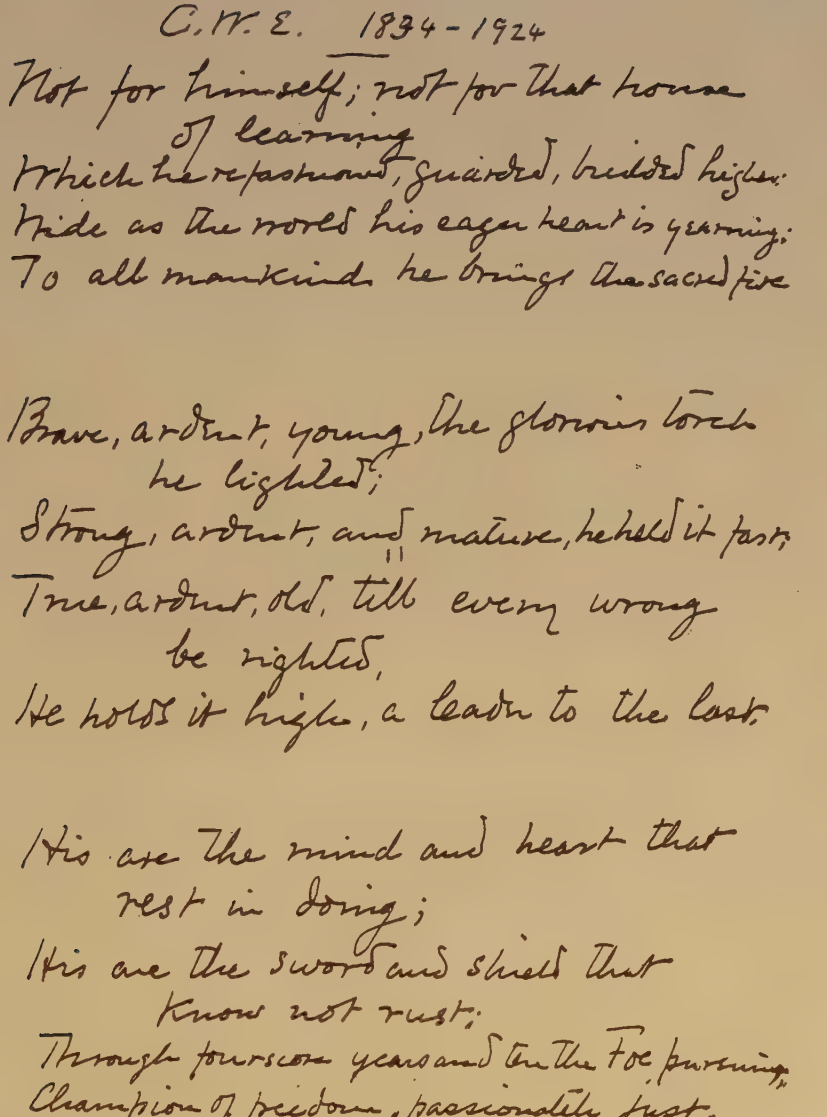
Numerous odes written by poets laureate will testify that a special occasion usually calls forth the most banal that is in a writer. Yet Dean Briggs

was sometimes prevailed upon to undertake the writing of verse for such occasions. He knew the hazards, and he was always deeply humble over what he produced. Perhaps in this verse he did not escape so fortunately from the *clichés* as he did in his prose. Yet in some of it he wrote with feeling and skill. On the occasion of one of Booker T. Washington's visits to Boston, Dean Briggs was asked to read a poem at a Tavern Club dinner. This poem, which employs skillfully the words, "The Lord hath spoken; let my people go," closes with these two stanzas:

My people, bound in darkness and in terror;
My people, childlike, trustful, patient, slow;
Yearning for light, yet groping long in error,—
"Children of freedom, let my people go!"

Stretch forth thine hand, O prophet giant-hearted;
Divide the waters of the rolling sea!
Lead thou thine host amidst the billows parted
Till black shall stand with white, erect and free.

Much of his verse dealt with the institution of which he was a part. No man ever loved Harvard College more; and no small part of his writing expresses that love. Perhaps his best-known verse on the subject is "To Harvard College." He addressed


C. W. E. 1834 - 1924

Not for himself; not for that house of learning
Which he repastured, guarded, bridged higher
Wide as the world his eager heart is yearning:
To all mankind he brings the sacred fire

Brave, ardent, young, the glorious torch he lighted;
Strong, ardent, and mature, he held it fast;
True, ardent, old, till every wrong be righted,
He holds it high, a leader to the last.

His are the mind and heart that rest in doing;
His are the sword and shield that know not rust;
Through fourscore years and ten the foe pursuing,
Champion of freedom, passionately just.

A Page of Dean Briggs's Manuscript

Draft of his verses written for the ninetieth birthday of President Eliot

some lines also to Major Henry L. Higginson, founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and donor of the Harvard Union and Soldiers Field, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. He wrote about President Eliot and his ninetieth birthday—and in one stanza gave a vigorous characterization of President Eliot's long career:

Brave, ardent, young, the glorious torch he lighted;
Strong, ardent, and mature, he held it fast;
True, ardent, old — till every wrong be righted
He holds it high, a leader to the last.

He wrote also about Harvard in his Phi Beta Kappa poem, "Mater Fortissima,"[1] which is too long to reprint, but from which these lines are taken:

From the North, from the South, from the East, from the West,
They come, to be born again;
To the North, to the South, to the East, to the West,
They go, to prove them men.
In the field, at the desk, at the court, in the mart,
With the joy in their eyes and the fire in their heart,
To struggle, to strive, to obey, to command,
To work, and to leaven the land.

Again the song the fathers sang before us!
The cheer that rings through voice and heart again!

[1] Read in Cambridge, June 25, 1903. Quoted by permission from the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*.

The multitudinous, triumphant chorus!
  The mighty mother marshalling her men!
O mother whose benignant arms enfold us,
  O heart of all New England, bravest, best,
Whose voice, forever strong and sweet, hath told us
  That life is work and work alone is rest,

God be thy guide as onward still thou farest;
  Still breathe upon thy sons the hero's breath;
And still, as high and higher yet thou darest,[1]
  Fear nothing; "be thou faithful unto death."

The verse which brought him no little non-academic recognition was a poem written upon invitation for the three-hundredth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. The celebration was nationally significant, and it was carried through on a large scale. A magnificent pageant was presented under the direction of Professor George P. Baker—a pageant, it should be said for any who may fear an unliberated Puritan spirit, that was participated in by many young men and women who spoke little, if any, of the English language and required instruction on why the celebration was to be held. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, just one hundred years after Daniel Web-

[1] "Altiora semper audes
Exitu cum prospero."
—PROFESSOR J. B. GREENOUGH:
Harvard Hymn.

ster had delivered his melodious Plymouth oration, read an address on "The Pilgrims of Plymouth" which measured favorably with Webster's in sheer length and surpassed it in grasp and penetration.

On the platform with Senator Lodge sat Dean Briggs. The reading of a poem on such an occasion, especially when the entire celebration has taken on the character of a pageant the understanding of which requires no deep concentration, is not ordinarily a welcome part of the program. But Dean Briggs read with such unaffected fervor that the audience listened in rapt silence to the very end, and then burst into applause distinctly more tumultuous than that which marked the end of Senator Lodge's oration.

Some lines from the middle portion of this poem will reveal that he put into it a fine austerity and sense of workmanship not always characteristic of "pageant poetry":

> Yet even as we in our pride rejoice,
> Hark to the prophet's warning voice:
> "The Pilgrim's thrift is vanished,
> And the Pilgrim's faith is dead,
> And the Pilgrim's God is banished,
> And Mammon reigns in his stead;
> And work is damned as an evil,
> And men and women cry,

In their restless haste, 'Let us spend and waste,
And live; for to-morrow we die.'

"And law is trampled under;
And the nations stand aghast,
As they hear the distant thunder
Of the storm that marches fast;
And we, — whose ocean borders
Shut off the sound and the sight,—
We will wait for marching orders;
The world has seen us fight;
We have earned our days of revel;
'On with the dance!' we cry.
'It is pain to think; we will eat and drink,
And live — for to-morrow we die.

" 'We have laughed in the eyes of danger;
We have given our bravest and best;
We have succored the starving stranger;
Others shall heed the rest.'
And the revel never ceases;
And the nations hold their breath;
And our laughter peals, and the mad world reels
To a carnival of death.

"Slaves of sloth and the senses,
Clippers of Freedom's wings,
Come back to the Pilgrim's army
And fight for the King of Kings;
Come back to the Pilgrim's conscience;
Be born in the nation's birth;
And strive again as simple men
For the freedom of the earth."

These excursions with the pen occupied no considerable part of his life. He never had time to let an idea resolve itself into something pliable, ready for the pen, as every writer demands. When anyone asked him to write on a given subject, his certain reply was, "But I have nothing to say"—so far were the insistent demands of the moment constantly pushing him from reflective thought. Yet in the course of such hasty excursions as he could make, he quickened many who were doubtful or slothful; he amused himself; he lent poetic color to a few pretentious occasions; and he sometimes suggested the power of the written word which might have been his had he not always been occupied with other matters.

CHAPTER IX

The Reach of His Power

I

DEAN BRIGGS'S last hour with his students represents in miniature the place his life has occupied in America and the manner in which he has influenced his time.

The thirty men who constituted the course had assembled in the little room on the first floor of Sever Hall. They talked quietly together, and glanced about expectantly. A few former members of the course who had remembered that this was the Dean's last day slipped into the extra chairs in the rear of the room. Promptly at two o'clock the Dean stepped from the office adjoining the classroom and took his place at the desk.

Immediately the silence became absolute. Most of the men looked at him with frank affection, as if to say, "Well, we are to have another hour of it, anyhow." Three or four self-consciously picked at their pens or the edge of their desks. But he only spread out some themes so that he might see the

names of the authors of them readily. He missed one, and hurried back into the office. After he had reappeared and disappeared a half-dozen times, he came finally from the door as if he were ready.

The men wondered if he would come through the hour "in character." He was nervous; it might have been his first class rather than his last. Everybody noticed that his right index finger, infected while he worked with his automobile a few days before, was encased in a great black "poke." The injury would have kept many a man at home and in bed. It only made him a little more awkward than usual with his hands. He sat down at his desk, glanced at the comment on some of the themes as he fumbled through them once more, and then arose. The tension was becoming a little too great. The men were ready to know how he meant to finish off his long career.

"In casting about for something appropriate for this last meeting of the year," he began with an undertone of humor and quite casually, as though he expected to come to last meetings through indefinite years, "I was tempted to give you a lecture on the use of *shall* and *will*." The tension was relieved; the class roared in laughter.

He actually said a few words about *shall* and *will*

which made these mature men see how much character might go into their style through the skillful use of these two words. In order to illustrate he quoted several sentences, among them the King James version of Joab's words to Abishai, "If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee," and discussed briefly the discrimination required of rulers to make commands and promises gracefully, and reminded the class, once for all, of the fidelity with which *should* and *would* follow *shall* and *will.*

He spoke apologetically about his insistence upon the schoolboy virtues in style, and assured the class that he had never once spoken about small things for their own sake. "What I want you to do is to make everything you write a work of art; and you cannot do that unless the small things receive their due attention."

Then, according to the schedule of any other day, he read from what the men had written; first, some critical observations submitted only two or three days before. While he read these he was constantly observing, "See what happens if you leave that phrase out." "Clearly too much porch for the meeting-house." "If you can't find just the right word,

send out the messenger from the back of your head and don't be satisfied till the messenger reports." After he had finished these brief critical comments, he read an uproariously amusing story about a summer girl—possibly an Indian-summer girl—and two of her slaves. The men and the Dean laughed almost to exhaustion at the genuine humor of the story and at the farcical devices which the writer had sometimes resorted to in order to keep the reader hurrying along. It was much more amusing than most stories that are printed.

When he had finished he glanced at his watch and remarked that he had just five minutes left, and that he wished to use the time in the reading of a printed paragraph. With one of his subcutaneous smiles creeping over his face he remarked slyly: "I am a Victorian" . . .; but the skepticism in the eyes of everyone before him caused him to add—"that is, I grew up with the Victorians." He leafed through a good-sized volume until he found the passage, and added further: "So you will pardon me if I read something to you from Ruskin." Then without comment he read these lines, his voice tense and tired, but earnest and contagiously cheerful:

> Therefore it is, that every system of teaching is false which holds forth "great art" as in any wise to be taught to

students, or even to be aimed at by them. Great art is precisely that which never was, nor will be taught, it is pre-eminently and finally the expression of the spirits of great men; so that the only wholesome teaching is that which simply endeavors to fix those characters of nobleness in the pupil's mind, of which it seems easily susceptible; and without holding out to him, as a possible or even probable result, that he should ever paint like Titian, or carve like Michael Angelo, enforces upon him the manifest possibility, and assured duty, of endeavoring to draw in a manner at least honest and intelligible; and cultivates in him those general charities of heart, sincerities of thought, and graces of habit which are likely to lead him, throughout life, to prefer openness to affectation, realities to shadows, and beauty to corruption.[1]

He closed the book with a gesture of finality. The students sprang to their feet and clapped for five minutes. He had been hearing applause all his life, yet he was so embarrassed that he knew not what to do, and awkwardly arose and began to pass out themes to the men who stood in the front row. But the cheering went on. At last he looked up as if to speak, and the men were silent. "Thank you!" he said simply; and then, before the applause began again, and more to himself than anyone else he added, "I am through with my teaching in Harvard College."

[1] *Greatness of Style.*

II

That was his only method. He went earnestly but not gravely about the doing of things that could be done, and he thought upon those other more remote things toward which one might look as some day possible. He never confused the work which can be done through mere skill with that which can be done only by a reconstructed soul; he never let men lose sight of the fact emphasized by Sidney Dobell, that some principles are to work by and others are to grow by. But he was always hopeful that men could both work and grow to advantage.

He never "taught" too much. There was a powerful trace of the non-pedantic, the non-pedagogic, in the most pedagogic thing he ever did. Had a stranger dropped into his classroom for fifteen minutes—or into his office—he might well have carried away the impression that the Dean was trivial, without clear educational intent. He terrified the parents of some of his students by reading parodies on "The Last Ride Together," and "A Grammarian's Funeral"—or some such poems—in his course on Browning. But always there was the imperceptible shading from the trivial to the more important. His approach was through sensitive-

ness—sensitiveness to the whimsical, to the humorous, to the beautiful. Always was he looking for sensitiveness, and, to borrow one of his own phrases, he was always transmuting sensitiveness into strength. It was a woman intelligently devoted to clarifying the social atmosphere, and not a commercial traveler, who was able to declare that the tone of the conversation was always lifted when the Dean came into the room.

It is not possible to think of this New Englander at grips for nearly a half-century with a body of interesting specific problems without thinking also of another New Englander of the same period—so great is the contrast. While Dean Briggs was an undergraduate at Harvard, and for a time afterward, Henry Adams was a young assistant professor of mediæval history in the same institution. Both were children of a long line of New England ancestors; both had attended Harvard College because Harvard College was taken for granted; and both possessed a power of interesting young men. But here the parallel ends. Adams, in the interesting volume in which he commemorates his own inactivity, said that "he could never get his work done to please him for he never could satisfy himself what to do." Anyhow, he mused, why should anybody "train an

active mind to waste its energy"? Always he seems to have found himself in the wrong spot—too early or too late to learn anything. He lost himself—as he believed most of the highest intelligence known to history had done—in introspection. His own community baffled him; national politics baffled him; fashion was amusing but chaotic and complex; the public press had no ultimate significance; everybody misunderstood the American woman! Other terrors were more appalling. Karl Pearson had declared that apart from the mind of man, one logically could find only chaos. How could one move when stared at by so many question marks? And what would be the use of moving if one should decide to do so?

Compared with this brilliant thinker who stopped his own circulation by trying to swallow the universe whole, Dean Briggs seems like a child. He did have a child's wonder, directness of sight, and eagerness to be active. Henry Adams saw in Harvard College only the least harmful institution in America, and turned away despairing. Dean Briggs, not in the least suffering from the blindness of an optimist, found in the same institution the opportunity of a lifetime. Many things in the world merited reflection and merciless criticism. But here were a few things that could be done at once if only one went

about it. The reflection and criticism could be taken up between times. Young men everywhere about him wanted to learn how to do something interesting, how to climb to a position a little less stuffy, a little more illuminated, than the one occupied by their elders. These he could work with. Perhaps Karl Pearson was right; perhaps there was chaos outside the human mind. But might we not have a little less inside?

Adams sat in the evening sunlight on the steps of Santa Maria in Aracœli and wondered what the decline of Rome meant—if anything; or what life anywhere meant—if anything. Dean Briggs walked through Church Street and Brattle in his modest New England city, the full evening sun in his face, a great weariness upon him, but in his heart the satisfaction of having that day quickened a lazy youth to responsibility, helped another to see the honesty and joy of thinking as straight as possible, and convinced another of the importance of more than fairness in play. Perhaps the world might some day mean something if only there were in it enough individuals who meant something.

Compared with Henry Adams's elevated disquisitions on politics, on the origin of social movements, on dynamic theories of history, the Dean's daily

routine seems humble enough. But his humility was that of the prophet. For after we have put all flummery aside, all our modern suspicion that anything simple must be too utopian for use, who dares to rise up and say that anything will help more to make the future intelligible than a greater clarity in men's seeing, thinking, and speaking, a more respectful cordiality in their association together at work, and a more chivalrous regard for one another at play? Or who can conscientiously take issue with him in his stout maintenance that the way to have men and women "equal" is not by bringing the best women down to the level of the worst men, but by bringing the worst men up to the level of the best women? It may seem remote; he may be a hundred or a thousand years ahead of his time. But in our undegraded moments we know that his contention is sound. And it might bear some remote relation to the problems of civilization which baffled Henry Adams.

III

The source of myths—that is, some spring of very real experience—was in his life; his influence upon men grew rather than diminished after they left his presence.

Dean Briggs

It is not a small matter to become a powerful influence among the alumni of a twentieth century university. The graduates are numerous; the living men of Harvard number about fifty thousand—more than Napoleon had at either the Pyramids or Marengo. Many of these men who worked only in the graduate and professional schools never knew Dean Briggs; some of them never saw him. Yet in some manner did he touch their lives with such intimate power that they, as a group, have accepted him as a person specially their own. "He has helped me tremendously; but he never knew it," has been uttered by thousands of Harvard men. President Lowell expressed to Dean Briggs something of this unanimous regard of the alumni when Dean Briggs was about to give up the presidency of Radcliffe College, two years before he gave up his duties at Harvard.

December 23, 1922.

Dear Briggs:

When a man lays down an important public office which he has held, as you have the presidency of Radcliffe, for a score of years, he has no right to object to words of public appreciation. There is no need of your friends telling you of their personal affection. That you know. Nor would there be any need of telling you what is thought of you were it not for your own extreme modesty. With the graduates

of Radcliffe, I am not so familiar as I am with those of Harvard, but it is not too much to say that no man has ever enjoyed so widespread a respect and affection among Harvard graduates as you have; and that this is due to the warmth of your own sympathy, and the height of your own character everyone is aware. I write you these things in this way because I know that you would not allow me to say them to you.

With best wishes for many years of happiness and usefulness, and hoping that Radcliffe may find a successor who will carry out the anticipations that friends foresee, I am

Your affectionate friend,

A. LAWRENCE LOWELL.

This affectionate sense of gratitude was more and more openly expressed as Dean Briggs approached the age of retirement. Always as a man rounds into the sixties or seventies, it is easier for others to see his worth. The petty incidentals have been definitely overshadowed by whatever essential good he has contributed. And with Dean Briggs, there could be no doubt. Men felt the intimacy of his power. It may seem unusual for young men, middle-aged men, and old men, who pass along the street to stop before a photographer's display-case and smile glowingly, proudly, reverently at the photograph — always a poor one — of a genial, wrinkled face that to the casual onlooker has no amazing qualities at all. Yet that is what happens

whenever a photographer is shrewd enough to capitalize the personal standing of the Dean. His power to set the whole day right for alumni was once summarized by Dean Howard McClenahan of Princeton, who worked for many years with Dean Briggs on an intercollegiate athletic committee: "I walked with Dean Briggs along the street in New York the other day. I could tell every Harvard man we were about to meet by the way his face lighted up when he saw the Dean. There was a hearty greeting, a few words about the family or some classmate, the Dean's hopeful 'Good-by'; and then the man hurried on his way as radiant as if some one had enriched him with a benediction—and some one had." An alumnus from the Middle West has said: "We had all sorts of things to differ about when we were in college, and we have them still; but we can always get together on the Dean."

Constantly they were wishing, too, that he might come and speak to their clubs—in near and remote places. They knew how tired he was, and he need not say much; but he must come and let them look at him. Whether he could go or not, they talked about him; they told stories about him; they repeated his own favorite stories; they sang about him:

THAT LITTLE OLD STRAW HAT

(Tune, "The Little Old Red Shawl")

1

Some folks sing of war and love,
  Others, of the "stars above,"
And others fill their songs with classic lore.
  But for me there's naught like that;
  I shall sing about a hat—
That little old straw hat that Briggsy wore.

CHORUS

  That little old straw hat,
  That little old straw hat,
That little old straw hat that Briggsy wore;
  It was tattered, it was torn,
  Many years it had been worn,
That little old straw hat that Briggsy wore.

2

In warm weather, at the game,
  In the sun or wind or rain,
In old Sever, in the Yard, or in old Gore;
  Where we saw our genial Dean
  Just as surely could be seen
That little old straw hat that Briggsy wore.

3

But the best of things must end:
  In nineteen three, our friend,
The hat, was ruined in a great downpour;

And it broke up, straw by straw,
'Twas the last we ever saw
Of that little old straw hat that Briggsy wore.

4

Here's a health to that old hat,
That yellow, mellow hat,
That jolly-fellow hat that Briggsy wore.
And a lusty health, at that,
To the man beneath the hat—
That jolly old straw hat that Briggsy wore.

But whether or not he could go to them, they never ceased to come to him. In the thirty-four years following his appointment to the deanship of the college, not merely hundreds but thousands of graduates came back to Cambridge hoping that they might catch a glimpse of him.[1] They trotted across the Yard with him as he hurried to catch a car, and felt generously repaid for a long trip to Cambridge. Or he took them along with him to Jimmie's for a "perpendicular" lunch, or to Soldiers Field for a baseball game, or to his country place in the Plymouth woods for a few hours in the quiet presence of the Pond.

[1] He was Exchange Professor at the Sorbonne in the early months of 1919. The cheerful fireside which he and Mrs. Briggs maintained at the Hotel de Danube was enjoyed by hundreds of Harvard men in the American army and Radcliffe women in the hospital service after the news went abroad that the Dean was in France.

One young man who had been away from Harvard only two or three years, yet who was homesick, as young men everywhere become, for some familiar brick walls, succeeded at some expense of time and money in being in Cambridge just at the close of the college year. If only he should have the good fortune to see the Dean! He pushed expectantly into the office in the top of University Hall. A secretary who understood why men came back to this office explained that the Dean really was in Cambridge that day, but that he was attending a funeral at Appleton Chapel—it was then almost noon—and that he was to return to the country at one o'clock. She was sorry, very sorry; she knew precisely how he felt; but there was nothing more encouraging to say.

He went down into the Yard feeling that he might as well have stayed at home. As he walked leisurely along one of the paths, whom should he see but Dean Briggs, in morning coat and top hat, hurrying into Stoughton Hall! He knew the Dean could come out only by that door; so he stationed himself and waited.

Soon the Dean reappeared. "Why hello there! Where did you come from?" he called as he saw the man. But the Dean no longer wore a top hat, but

a derby. He observed the man's puzzled expression and, laughing, commanded him: "Come along with me; I must catch a train; I'll tell you as we walk."

As this man trotted along beside the hurrying Dean, he learned the following picturesque facts: Dean Briggs had arrived from the country so late that morning that he had been obliged to telephone from the station and have his clothes sent down from the house to his office in order to get to the funeral at all. The servant who had sent them down had failed to include his hat and gloves. He dressed, and took a look at himself in the mirror. But a yellowish straw hat—a hat established in Harvard history—did not go well with his other more formal clothing. So he went to the Harvard Co-operative Society's haberdashery and tried to borrow a top hat. He could find nothing in his size. But he hastily snatched a pair of gloves and hurried to a neighboring clothing store without so much as taking his straw hat. This second dealer could not provide him with the necessary hat, but, since time was short, suggested that he wear a derby, and be less conspicuous than in a straw hat. This suggestion he accepted. But as he hurried back across the Yard to the Chapel, he met an unmarried officer of instruction who lived in Stoughton Hall, and in a

breathless word explained his predicament. This colleague took him to his room in Stoughton and provided him with a top hat.

These facts the youth learned as he tagged along. He had seen the top hat returned; he went with the Dean to Brine's and saw the derby returned; he accompanied the Dean as he walked bare-headed from Brine's to the "Coop"; he saw him pay for the gloves and reclaim his straw hat. Then he was invited to "walk along" and visit from Harvard Square to 146 Brattle Street, where the Dean talked about the dangers of predigested education while he hurriedly cut open some packages of mail with a great pocket knife before he rushed away to the train.

For this man who had traveled so far to see Cambridge, the visit was now memorable. He went away happy and renewed. There could be no doubt about the great integrity of Harvard University, about the value of higher education generally, about the wisdom expressed in all American enterprises. The reassuring sight of one man had set the entire world straight.

This expression of affectionate regard by the alumni—an expression which revealed the reach of his power in his own college family—came to its

most enthusiastic unanimity when the news went abroad late in February, 1925, that he was to retire in June. "Dean Briggs to retire? Impossible! Anyhow, he isn't old enough, is he?" Professor Kuno Francke, for many years his colleague, expressed the general feeling when he said that Dean Briggs might resign, but never could retire. "He is inextricably interwoven with everything about her [Harvard] and there are traces of him everywhere in her precincts. The Yard, the River, the Stadium, Sanders Theatre, the Faculty Room, Sever, the Union, daily themes, composition, football dinners, probation, prizes, scholarships, dropped freshmen, goodies, boardwalks, the *Crimson,* the *Advocate,* the *Lampoon,* regulations and irregularities, grinds and loafers, Gentile and Jew, hour exams and Class Day —what good or evil phase in all our college life is there in which Briggs did not detect the human element, and in which he did not help in the making of manhood?" [1]

The alumni wanted to tell him that they thought there was no one on earth just like him. Men hardened by business competition and the trying responsibilities of public life spoke of this man with a gentleness and reverence that to the outsider must

[1] The *Harvard Crimson,* February 25, 1925.

have seemed close to sentimentality. But they could not speak directly to him. Men might bother him to the point of exhaustion with problems which indirectly expressed appreciation; but he had to be cornered if anyone ever spoke to him openly. So the alumni asked him to be present at dinners; they sent him words of testimony through the mails; they resorted to all sorts of strategy to let him know, to have him present, without embarrassing him overmuch.

All of these testimonials of esteem, all of these celebrations in his honor, came to an unparalleled climax on the afternoon of Commencement Day, June 18, 1925. According to custom, the alumni marched to the quadrangle east of Sever Hall to hear the president of the Alumni Association, the president of the university, and certain of the men who had received honorary degrees at the Commencement exercises in the morning. They had asked Dean Briggs to be so obliging as to come and sit on the platform with the speakers; and upon the solemn assurance of those who asked him that he would not be called upon to speak, he assented. The class of 1900, back to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, had in similar manner invited him to be present at a meeting on the preceding Sunday after-

noon, and he had been allowed to come and go undisturbed—except by such a spontaneous ovation as few men have ever received. He was not urged to speak. So he accepted the invitation for Thursday afternoon. He would not be obliged to participate except by being present.

There was applause and a flutter of comment when he appeared among those filing to the platform. Then the alumni just looked at him and talked with one another about him. He was so far away up there that he could not tell whether two or three thousand men were looking at him or at some one else. Did he look older? Perhaps yes; but not very much.

The meeting was called to order. Professor Charles H. Grandgent, president of the Alumni Association for the year, presided with more than his usual brilliance. He amused everyone with his numerous apt references to Edward Everett. Nobody had recently thought of Edward Everett as a source of supply.

He introduced President Lowell, who was greeted with a storm of applause. The President spoke luminously about the policy of the university, and he made a financial report that amazed the alumni with its munificence. Of course there were many millions of dollars—ten in all—for the fine arts, for

chemistry, for business administration. But in addition there were other millions. The alumni listened with pride. Some of the university's needs were to be met!

"Then," President Lowell continued, glancing in the direction of Dean Briggs, "there is another fund which at the present moment amounts to $63,490 and is expected to be more. I shall read the gift of that fund.

" 'Out of the depth of their respect, loyalty, gratitude, and affection for Dean Briggs . . . ' "

He was not permitted to finish the sentence. The alumni sprang to their feet and applauded with overwhelming enthusiasm. The chief marshal of the day leaped to some eminence in the front of the assembly and called for "Nine Rahs for Dean Briggs," and they were given lustily, and followed by more and more cheering until the Dean, startled, arose to bow his acknowledgments. He could not quite believe that he had heard President Lowell's announcement aright, and he sank back into his chair as if he were some spiritual entity enveloped in a cloud. Professor Bliss Perry, who sat beside him, helped to restore him to reliance upon his senses by giving him an affectionate slap on the shoulders. Finally President Lowell was allowed to read on

and explain that this fund was for Mr. and Mrs. Briggs, and that when they were through with it, it was to be "used for such purpose or purposes of the university as Dean Briggs may direct or appoint," etc., etc. Then there was renewed applause.

When Professor Grandgent was able to be heard he said: "The only quotation I can think of this time that would be appropriate is, 'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.' "

This unusual gift—large enough to guarantee a return of three thousand dollars a year or more for life—was something not to be disregarded. Yet, after all, the entire demonstration was only a boyish effort to express more or less casually a gratitude too profound, too intimate, to be expressed in any more personal manner.

Just as steadily his unflinching idealism made its way to regions but indirectly touched by his own university. "Whenever," a vigorous and heroic college president in the Middle West once said, "I am confronted with a difficult case of discipline such as must occasionally come to a president of a small college, I put it aside till the next day and go home and reread some of Dean Briggs's *School, College,*

and Character, or his *Routine and Ideals.* I want a standard by which I can make sure that I am dealing with my own case justly." College deans by the score, despite the growth of the monstrous institutions which have threatened to obscure the purpose of education completely, struggled to apply his ideals to their own well-nigh impossible tasks. His effort to salvage the best in human nature became an educational tradition—not necessarily followed, for following it faithfully would be difficult for college deans in many places. But here was something to be aimed at, to be flashed upon those whose wholesale methods had utterly destroyed their educative power.

One need only to move about in a variety of universities and colleges in order to see how subtly, how firmly his ideals have taken hold, even in remote places. Two men from the Middle West one day discussed education when they chanced to meet in New York. "That is what Dean Briggs once said," one of them observed. Whereupon the other, himself a director of a gigantic educational enterprise, spoke with great admiration for the Dean, discussed intimately his contribution to American life, and characterized him faithfully. "He is a national character," he concluded. There was an agreeable

pause of assent; and then the first man asked: "Where did you know Dean Briggs?" And the other admitted that he had never had the fortune to see him, and that his knowledge was altogether second-hand.

His strength in remote institutions was precisely his strength at home: it was in the life of the students. Either through the intermediary of some college adviser or through some good fortune in the library, his books fell into the hands of tens of thousands of students; and the students found here an honest, friendly discussion of so many matters that perplexed them, that they read the books avidly. A young professor in a small college put on the reserved shelves of the library six books pertaining to college life. He asked one hundred and twelve freshmen to go to the library, glance through these books, and be prepared two or three days later to indicate the ones in which they individually should prefer to read a hundred pages. One hundred and six of the one hundred and twelve chose Dean Briggs's *School, College, and Character.*

The success or failure of a youth in college is not usually determined by the manipulation of ponderous educational machinery, but by some such supposedly trivial matter as who loafs in his room of

evenings, how conveniently he can transport himself for week-ends, and what kind of eighteen-year-old girl he spends his time with in his home town—or his college town. So there is nothing strange in the fact that Dean Briggs's talks on the mistakes of college life, his discussions of honor and morals and the satisfaction of cleanness, have become a kind of Bible for thousands of college freshmen the country over. For twenty years it has been possible to go into a quiet attic in almost any college town and there on the wall by the green shade of the study lamp of a young man who faces the future single-handed, find some sentence of the Dean's to which this youth turns hourly for support.

The noncollegiate public came under his influence largely through his interest in sports. Sports are close to the American public's soul. So when it was widely discovered that here was a champion not merely of sport but of the kind of sport that would send both winners and losers away from contests with a right feeling for one another, the public wished to learn more about "the unusual professor." He had other interests, had he not, besides athletics? And what were they? And what did he think about this problem or that? In his later life his mails were heavy with requests for all sorts of counsel—from

schoolboys who hoped to enter college, from men in spiritual distress, from public men who had boys to educate, from the President of the United States who was working out an educational policy for his family.

The public, too, sooner or later developed an affection for him. In a country where there is no son or daughter of a king—or other nonpolitical personage of rank—for the people to shower their affection upon, they are always alert to find some one free enough from political or economic entanglements, and good enough in his own name, to be thus loved disinterestedly. This man had never been heard of in connection with official crookedness, public or private scandal, or the cheap and transient glamour of public office. All in all, he was about the poorest "limelighter" in the world. It was good to hear the seemingly authentic reports that such a man existed.

Little wonder, then, that men generally came to look upon him as a kind of precious possession which they might share. If he chanced to be in the hospital for a period, the newspapers reported his progress as though it were a matter of general concern—and it was. Tokens of esteem came from men and women through the whole range of colleagues, busi-

ness men, students, workmen, policemen, and domestic servants. And when his retirement was announced the metropolitan newspapers discussed him in lengthy editorials—in which they said that "the only blot on his character is his modesty" or held him up as an example of how "the meek shall inherit the earth." In the course of seventy years he had become an intimate part of the life of his country.

IV

There is something pleasantly symbolic in the fact that he stepped from his official position while he was yet vigorous and alert and eager to live—as he always had been. From the time he began teaching English in 1883 till he brought all his official labor to a close, he never took a sabbatical year of rest. When some one asked him how he managed to keep going, he replied, "Oh, I just lived on."

In that process he acquired such momentum that not even his retirement allows his spirit to stop. No one can think of him as growing old. And he never shall. The men who come back and walk quietly through the corridors where the endless army of youth stamps noisily, will think only of a youthful spirit who guided them wisely in their own noisy days. Those who never saw him will think likewise

of some one who was always youthful. Some little part of his youthful earnestness, his youthful love for every aspiring thing, his youthful faith, and his austere youthful idealism will pass into the diverging procession in which he has marched for a time, and he shall have the immortality that may be enjoyed among men.

THE END

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